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O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD

PRIZE STORIES

1919

CHOSEN BY THE SOCIETY OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

SANTA ROSA, CAL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1920

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
NGLAND TO AMERICA. By Margaret Prescott Montague	3
FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO. By Wilbur Daniel Steele	21
IEY GRIND EXCEEDING SMALL. By Ben Ames Williams	42
N STRIKE. By Albert Payson Terhune	56
IE ELEPHANT REMEMBERS. By Edison Marshall	78
JRKEY RED. By Frances Gilchrist Wood	105
VE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD. By Melville Davisson Post	120
IE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON. By Thomas Grant Springer	135
HUMORESQUE." By Fannie Hurst	148
IE LUBBENY KISS. By Louise Rice	180
IE TRIAL IN TOM BELCHER'S STORE. By Samuel A. Derieux	192
RCELAIN CUPS. By James Branch Cabell	210
IE HIGH COST OF CONSCIENCE. By Beatrice Ravenel	228
IE KITCHEN GODS. By G. F. Alsop	253
RIL 25TH, As USUAL. By Edna Ferber	274

33417

INTRODUCTION

On April 18, 1918, the Society of Arts and Sciences of New York City paid tribute to the memory of William Sydney Porter at a dinner in honour of his genius. In the ball-room of the Hotel McAlpin there gathered, at the speakers' table, a score of writers, editors and publishers who had been associated with O. Henry during the time he lived in Manhattan; in the audience, many others who had known him, and hundreds yet who loved his short stories.

Enthusiasm, both immediate and lasting, indicated to the Managing Director of the Society, Mr. John F. Tucker, that he might progress hopefully toward an ideal he had, for some time, envisioned. The goal lay in the establishing of a memorial to the author who had transmuted realistic New York into romantic Bagdad-by-the-Subway.

When, therefore, in December, 1918, Mr. Tucker called a committee for the purpose of considering such a memorial, he met a glad response. The first question, "What form shall the monument assume?" drew tentative suggestions of a needle in Gramercy Square, or a tablet affixed to the corner of O. Henry's home in West Twenty-sixth Street. But things of iron and stone, cold and dead, would incongruously commemorate the dynamic power that moved the hearts of living men and women, "the master pharmacist of joy and pain," who dispensed "sadness tinctured with a smile and laughter that dissolves in tears."

In short, then, it was decided to offer a minimum prize of $250 for the best short story published in 1919, and the following Committee of Award was appointed:

Blanche Colton Williams, Ph.D.
Edward J. Wheeler, Litt.D.
Ethel Watts Mumford
Robert Wilson Neal, M.A.
Merle St. Croix Wright, D.D.

It is significant that this committee had no sooner begun its round table conferences than the Society promised, through the Director, funds for two prizes. The first was fixed at $500, the second at $250.

At a meeting in January, 1919, the Committee of Award agreed upon the further conditions that the story must be the work of an American author, and must first appear in 1919 in an American publication. At the same time an Honorary Committee was established, composed of writers and editors, whose pleasure it might be to offer advice and propose stories for consideration. The Honorary Committee consisted of

GERTRUDE ATHERTON
EDWARD J. O'BRIEN
FANNIE HURST
JOHN MACY
BURGES JOHNSON
MRS. EDWIN MARKHAM
ROBERT MORSS LOVETT
JOHN S. PHILLIPS
WILLIAM MARION REEDY
VIRGINIA RODERICK
WALTER ROBERTS
CHARLES G. NORRIS
EDWARD E. HALE
MAX EASTMAN
CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE
MARGARET SHERWOOD
HAMLIN GARLAND
JAMES BRANCH CABELL
STUART P. SHERMAN
WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE
STEPHEN LEACOCK
MAJOR RUPERT HUGHES
EUGENE MANLOVE RHODES

The Committee of Award read throughout the year month by month, scores of stories, rejecting many, debating over others, and passing up a comparative few for final judgment. In January, out of the hundred or more remaining, they salvaged the following:

1. The Kitchen Gods, by Guglielma Alsop (*Century,* September).
2. Facing It, by Edwina Stanton Babcock (*Pictorial Review,* June).
3. The Fairest Sex, by Mary Hastings Bradley (*Metropolitan,* March).
4. Bargain Price, by Donn Byrne (*Cosmopolitan,* March).
5. Porcelain Cups, by James Branch Cabell (*Century,* November).
6. Gum Shoes, 4-B, by Forrest Crissey (*Harper's,* December).
7. The Trial in Tom Belcher's Store, by Samuel A. Derieux (*American,* June).
8. April Twenty-fifth As Usual, by Edna Ferber (*Ladies Home Journal,* July).
9. The Mottled Slayer, by George Gilbert (*Sunset,* August).
10. Dog Eat Dog, by Ben Hecht (*The Little Review,* April).
11. Blue Ice, by Joseph Hergesheimer (*Saturday Evening Post,* December 13).
12. Innocence, by Rupert Hughes (*Cosmopolitan,* September).
13. Humoresque, by Fannie Hurst (*Cosmopolitan,* March).
14. The Yellow Streak, by Ellen La Motte (*Century,* March).
15. The Elephant Remembers, by Edison Marshall (*Everybody's,* October).
16. England to America, by Margaret Prescott Montague (*Atlantic,* September).
17. Five Thousand Dollars Reward, by Melville D. Post (*Saturday Evening Post,* February 15).
18. The Lubbeny Kiss, by Louise Rice (*Ainslee's,* October).
19. The High Cost of Conscience, by Beatrice Ravenel (*Harper's,* January).
20. The Red Mark, by John Russell (*Collier's,* April 15).
21. The Trap, by Myra Sawhill (*American,* May).

22. Evening Primroses, by Anne D. Sedgwick (*Atlantic,* July).
23. Autumn Crocuses, by Anne D. Sedgwick (*Atlantic,* August).
24. The Blood of the Dragon, by Thomas Grant Springer (*Live Stories,* May).
25. Contact, by Wilbur Daniel Steele (*Harper's,* March).
26. For They Know not What They Do, by Wilbur Daniel Steele (*Pictorial Review,* July).
27. La Guiablesse, by Wilbur Daniel Steele (*Harper's,* September).
28. On Strike, by Albert Payson Terhune (*The Popular Magazine,* October).
29. The Other Room, by Mary Heaton Vorse (*McCall's,* April).
30. They Grind Exceeding Small, by Ben Ames Williams *Saturday Evening Post,* September 13).
31. On the Field of Honour, by Ben Ames Williams (*American,* March).
32. Turkey Red, by Frances Gilchrist Wood (*Pictorial Review,* November).

Although the exiguity of the vessel forbids inclusion of all these stories, yet the Committee wish to record them as worthy of preservation under covers. Publishing by title, therefore, carries all the honour attached to publishing the complete story.

Awarding the prizes proved difficult. No title stood first on all the lists: rated best by one judge, any story lost rank through lower rating by another. But the following held from first place to fifth place on the separate final lists: "La Guiablesse," "England to America," "For They Know not What They Do," "Evening Primroses," "Autumn Crocuses," "Humoresque," "The Red Mark," "They Grind Exceeding Small," "On Strike," "The Elephant Remembers," "Contact," and "Five Thousand Dollars Reward." It will be observed that three of Wilbur Daniel Steele's narratives appear. If the prize had been announced as going to the author of more stories rated first, he would have received it. But by the predetermined conditions, it must fall to the

author of the best story, and according to a recognized system of counts,* the best is "England to America"; the second best, "For They Know not What They Do." The first award, therefore, goes to Miss Margaret Prescott Montague; the second to Mr. Wilbur Daniel Steele.

The Committee were remarkably unanimous in answering the question, "What is a short-story?"; but they differed, rather violently, over the fulfilment of requirements by the various illustrations. Without doubt, the most provocative of these was Mr. Steele's "Contact." Three of the Committee think it a short-story; two declare it an article; all agree that no finer instance of literature in brief form was published in 1919.

Their diverging views, however, challenged curiosity: what did the publishers think about it? The editor of *Harper's* wrote:

"Contact" was written by Mr. Steele after a personal visit to the North Sea fleet. It is a faithful portrayal of the work done by our destroyers and therefore falls under the category of "articles."

And the author:

I am not quite sure what to say. The piece, "Contact," of which you speak, was in a sense drawn from life, that is to say it is made up of a number of impressions gained while I was at sea with the U. S. destroyers off the coast of France. The characters are elaborations of real characters, and the "contact" told of was such a one as I actually witnessed. Otherwise, the chronology of events, conversations, etc., were gathered from various sources and woven to the best of my ability so as to give a picture of the day's work of our convoying forces in the War.

These data reconcile, in part, the conflicting points of view, or at least show the tenability of each.

In addition to the first requisite of *struggle,* "the

* Since there were five judges, the system used was the following:

A	story	of	place	1	was	given	5	points	
"	"	"	"	2	"	"	4	"	
"	"	"	"	3	"	"	3	"	
"	"	"	"	4	"	"	2	"	
"	"	"	"	5	"	"	1	point.	

story's the thing," the judges sought originality, excellence in organization of plot incidents, skill in characterization, power in moving emotions—and, again, they differed over their findings. One member would have awarded the prize to "La Guiablesse" on its original *motif*—a ship is jealous of a woman—on its masterful employment of suggestion, unique presentation of events, and on all the other counts. Another, while recognizing the essential bigness of the tale, regards it as somewhat crudely constructed and as extending the use of suggestion into the mist of obscurity.

Or, take characterization. Mary Hastings Bradley's "The Fairest Sex" represents, in the climax, a reporter's fiancée betraying the whereabouts of a young woman who is, technically, a criminal. One of the Committee held that, under the circumstances, the psychology is false; others "believed" that particular girl did that particular thing.

Best narrative always compels belief: the longer the period of belief the greater the story. This business of convincing the reader requires more labour than the average writer seems to care about performing. Any reader is willing to be held—for a time. But how many stories compel recollection of plot and characters as indubitably a part of all that one has met?

Too frequently the writer neglects the value of atmosphere, forgetful of its weight in producing conviction. The tale predominantly of atmosphere (illustrated in the classic "Fall of the House of Usher"), revealing wherever found the ability of the author to hold a dominant mood in which as in a calcium light characters and acts are coloured, this tale occurs so rarely as to challenge admiration when it does occur. "For They Know not What They Do" lures the reader into its exotic air and holds him until he, too, is suffused, convinced.

. . . The Committee were not insensible to style. But expert phrasing, glowing appreciation of words and exquisite sense of values, the texture of the story fabric —all dropped into the abyss of the unimportant after the material they incorporated had been judged. No man brings home beefsteak in silk or sells figs as thistles.

The Committee accepted style as the fit medium for conveying the matter. . . .

Since the Committee confess to catholicity of taste, the chosen stories reveal predilection for no one type. They like detective stories, and particularly those of Melville Davisson Post. A follower of the founder of this school of fiction, he has none the less advanced beyond his master and has discovered other ways than those of the Rue Morgue. "Five Thousand Dollars Reward" in its brisk action, strong suspense, and humorous denouement carries on the technique so neatly achieved in "The Doomdorf Mystery" and other tales about Uncle Abner.

The Committee value, also, the story about animals: universal interest in puzzles, in the science of ratiocination, is not more pronounced than the interest in rationalizing the brute. "The Mottled Slayer" and "The Elephant Remembers" offer sympathetic studies of struggles in the animal world. Mr. Marshall's white elephant will linger as a memory, even as his ghost remains, longer than the sagacious play-fellow of Mr. Gilbert's little Indian; but nobody can forget the battle the latter fought with the python.

For stories about the home the Committee have a weakness: Miss Ferber's "April Twenty-fifth As Usual," cheerfully proclaiming the inevitableness of spring cleaning, might be published with the sub-title, An Epic of the Housekeeper.

They were alert for reflections of life—in America and elsewhere. The politics of "Gum Shoes, 4-B"; the local court of law in "Tom Belcher's Store"; the frozen west of "Turkey Red" seemed to them to meet the demand that art must hold the mirror up to nature.

In particular, the Committee hoped to find good stories of the war. Now that fiction containing anything of the Great Struggle is anathema to editors, and must wait for that indefinite time of its revival, it was like getting a last bargain to read "Facing It," "Humoresque," "Contact," "Autumn Crocuses," and "England to America." In these small masterpieces is celebrated either manhood which keeps a rendezvous with death,

womanhood which endures, or the courage of men and women which meets bodily misfortune and the anguish of personal loss. Leon Kantor of "Humoresque" and the young Virginian of "England to America" will bring back, to all who read, their own heroes. It is fitting that Miss Montague's story should have received the first prize: poignant, short in words, great in significance, it will stand a minor climactic peak in that chain of literature produced during the actual progress of the World War.

In the estimation of the Committee the year 1919 was not one of pre-eminent short stories. Why? There are several half-satisfactory explanations. Some of the acknowledged leaders, seasoned authors, have not been publishing their average annual number of tales. Alice Brown, Donn Byrne, Irvin Cobb, Edna Ferber, Katharine Gerould, Fannie Hurst and Mary W. Freeman are represented by spare sheaves. Again, a number of new and promising writers have not quite attained sureness of touch; although that they are acquiring it is manifest in the work of Ben Ames Williams, Edison Marshall, Frances Wood, Samuel Derieux, John Russell, Beatrice Ravenel and Myra Sawhill. Too frequently, there is "no story": a series of episodes however charmingly strung out is not a story; a sketch, however clever or humorous, is not a story; an essay, however wisely expounding a truth, is not a story. So patent are these facts, they are threadbare from repetition; yet of them succeeding aspirants seem to be as ignorant as were their predecessors —who at length found knowledge. For obvious reasons, names of authors who succeed in a certain literary form but who produce no story are omitted.

Again, some stories just miss the highest mark. A certain one, praised by a magazine editor as the best of the year, suffers in the opinion of the Committee, or part of the Committee, from an introduction too long and top-heavy. It not only mars the symmetry of the whole, this introduction, but starts the reader in the wrong direction. One thing the brief story must not do is to begin out of tone, to promise what it does not

fulfil, or to lead out a subordinate character as though he were chief. . . . Another story suffers from plethora of phrasing, and even of mere diction. Stevenson believed few of his words too precious to be cut: contemporary writers hold their utterances in greater esteem. . . . A third story shows by its obvious happy ending that the author has catered to magazine needs or what he conceives to be editorial policies. Such an author acquires a near "Smart Set" sparkle or a pseudo-Atlantic Monthly sobriety; he develops facility, but at the expense, ultimately, of conventionality, dullness and boredom.

According to the terms which omit foreign authors from possible participation in the prize, the work of Achmed Abdullah, Britten Austin, Elinor Mordaunt and others was in effect non-existent for the Committee. "Reprisal," by Mr. Austin, ranks high as a specimen of real short-story art, strong in structure, rich in suggestion. "The Honourable Gentleman," by the mage from Afghanistan, in reflecting Oriental life in the Occident, will take its place in literary history. Elinor Mordaunt's modernized biblical stories—"The Strong Man," for instance—in showing that the cycles repeat themselves and that today is as one of five thousand years ago exemplify the universality of certain motifs, fables, characters.

But, having made allowance for the truths just recounted, the Committee believe that the average of stories here bound together is high. They respond to the test of form and of life. "The Kitchen Gods" grows from five years of service to the women of China—service by the author, who is a doctor of medicine. "Porcelain Cups" testifies to the interest a genealogist finds in the Elizabethan Age and, more definitely, in the life of Christopher Marlowe. The hardships of David, in the story by Mr. Derieux, are those of a boy in a particular Southern neighbourhood the author knows. Miss Louise Rice, who boasts a strain of Romany blood, spends part of her year with the gypsies. Mr. Terhune is familiar, from the life, with his prototypes of "On Strike." "Turkey Red" relates a real experience, suited to fiction or to poetry—if Wordsworth was right—for it is an instance

of emotion remembered in tranquillity. In these and all the others, the story's the thing.

Some of them, perhaps, were produced *because* their creators were consciously concerned about the art of creation. "Blue Ice," by Joseph Hergesheimer, proclaims itself a study in technique, a thing of careful workmanship. "Innocence," by Rupert Hughes, with "Read It Again" and "The Story I Can't Write" boldly announce his desire to get the most out of the material. "For They Know not What They Do," an aspiration of spirit, is fashioned as firmly as the Woolworth Tower.

Just here it may be observed that the Committee noticed a tendency of the present day story which only the future can reveal as significant or insignificant. It is this: in spite of the American liking for the brief tale, as Poe termed it—the conte, as the French know it—in spite of an occasional call from magazines for stories of fewer than 5,000 words, yet the number of these narratives approaching perfection is considerably less than that of the longer story. Whether the long short-story gives greater entertainment to the greater number may be questioned. To state that it is farthest from the practice of O. Henry invites a logical and inevitable conclusion. He wrote two hundred stories averaging about fifteen pages each. Whether it may be greater literature is another matter; if it escapes tediousness it may impress by its weight. If the Committee had selected for publication all the longest stories in the list of thirty-two, this volume would contain the same number of words, but only half the titles.

The Honorary Committee expressed, some of them, to the Committee of Award certain preferences. William Marion Reedy wrote: "I read and printed one very good story called 'Baby Fever.' I think it is one of the best short stories of the year." John Phillips, though stating that he had not followed short stories very closely, thought the best one he had read "The Theatrical Sensation of Springtown," by Bess Streeter Aldrich (*American,* December). Mrs. Edwin Markham commended Charles Finger's "Canassa" (*Reedy's Mirror,* October

30). W. Adolphe Roberts submitted a number of stories from *Ainslee's:* "Young Love," by Nancy Boyd; "The Token from the Arena," by June Willard; "The Light," by Katherine Wilson. He also drew attention to "Phantom," by Mildred Cram (*Green Book,* March). That the Committee of Award, after a careful study of these and other recommendations, failed to confirm individual high estimates is but another illustration of the disagreement of doctors. To all those of the Honorary Committee who gave encouragement and aid the Committee of Award is most grateful.

There remains the pleasure of thanking, also, the authors and publishers who have kindly granted permission for the reprinting of the stories included in this volume. The Committee of Award would like them to know that renewal of the O. Henry prize depends upon their generous cooperation.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

NEW YORK CITY,
February 29, 1920.

O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD PRIZE STORIES 1919

ENGLAND TO AMERICA

By MARGARET PRESCOTT MONTAGUE

From *Atlantic Monthly*

I

"LORD, but English people are funny!"

This was the perplexed mental ejaculation that young Lieutenant Skipworth Cary, of Virginia, found his thoughts constantly reiterating during his stay in Devonshire. Had he been, he wondered, a confiding fool, to accept so trustingly Chev Sherwood's suggestion that he spend a part of his leave, at least, at Bishopsthorpe, where Chev's people lived? But why should he have anticipated any difficulty here, in this very corner of England which had bred his own ancestors, when he had always hit it off so splendidly with his English comrades at the Front? Here, however, though they were all awfully kind,—at least, he was sure they meant to be kind,—something was always bringing him up short: something that he could not lay hold of, but which made him feel like a blind man groping in a strange place, or worse, like a bull in a china-shop. He was prepared enough to find differences in the American and English points of view. But this thing that baffled him did not seem to have to do with that; it was something deeper, something very definite, he was sure—and yet, what was it? The worst of it was that he had a curious feeling as if they were all—that is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald; not Sir Charles so much—protecting him from himself—keeping him from making breaks, as he phrased it. That hurt and annoyed him, and piqued his vanity. Was he a social blunderer, and weren't a Virginia gentleman's manners to be trusted in England without leading-strings?

He had been at the Front for several months with the Royal Flying Corps, and when his leave came, his Flight Commander, Captain Cheviot Sherwood, discovering that he meant to spend it in England, where he hardly knew a soul, had said his people down in Devonshire would be jolly glad to have him stop with them; and Skipworth Cary, knowing that, if the circumstances had been reversed, his people down in Virginia would indeed have been jolly glad to entertain Captain Sherwood, had accepted unhesitatingly. The invitation had been seconded by a letter from Lady Sherwood,—Chev's mother,—and after a few days sight-seeing in London, he had come down to Bishopsthorpe, very eager to know his friend's family, feeling as he did about Chev himself. "He's the finest man that ever went up in the air," he had written home; and to his own family's disgust, his letters had been far more full of Chev Sherwood than they had been of Skipworth Cary.

And now here he was, and he almost wished himself away—wished almost that he was back again at the Front, carrying on under Chev. There, at least, you knew what you were up against. The job might be hard enough, but it wasn't baffling and queer, with hidden undercurrents that you couldn't chart. It seemed to him that this baffling feeling of constraint had rushed to meet him on the very threshold of the drawing-room, when he made his first appearance.

As he entered, he had a sudden sensation that they had been awaiting him in a strained expectancy, and that, as he appeared, they adjusted unseen masks and began to play-act at something. "But English people don't play-act very well," he commented to himself, reviewing the scene afterward.

Lady Sherwood had come forward and greeted him in a manner which would have been pleasant enough, if he had not, with quick sensitiveness, felt it to be forced. But perhaps that was English stiffness.

Then she had turned to her husband, who was standing staring into the fireplace, although, as it was June, there was no fire there to stare at.

"Charles," she said, "here is Lieutenant Cary"; and

her voice had a certain note in it which at home Cary and his sister Nancy were in the habit of designating "mother-making-dad-mind-his-manners."

At her words the old man—and Cary was startled to see how old and broken he was—turned round and held out his hand. "How d'you do?" he said jerkily, "how d'you do?" and then turned abruptly back again to the fireplace.

"Hello! What's up! The old boy doesn't like me!" was Cary's quick, startled comment to himself.

He was so surprised by the look the other bent upon him that he involuntarily glanced across to a long mirror to see if there was anything wrong with his uniform. But no, that appeared to be all right. It was himself, then—or his country; perhaps the old sport didn't fall for Americans.

"And here is Gerald," Lady Sherwood went on in her low remote voice, which somehow made the Virginian feel very far away.

It was with genuine pleasure, though with some surprise, that he turned to greet Gerald Sherwood, Chev's younger brother, who had been, tradition in the corps said, as gallant and daring a flyer as Chev himself, until he got his in the face five months ago.

"I'm mighty glad to meet you," he said eagerly, in his pleasant, muffled Southern voice, grasping the hand the other stretched out, and looking with deep respect at the scarred face and sightless eyes.

Gerald laughed a little, but it was a pleasant laugh, and his hand-clasp was friendly.

"That's real American, isn't it?" he said. "I ought to have remembered and said it first. Sorry."

Skipworth laughed too. "Well," he conceded, "we generally are glad to meet people in my country, and we don't care who says it first. But," he added. "I didn't think I'd have the luck to find you here."

He remembered that Chev had regretted that he probably wouldn't see Gerald, as the latter was at St. Dunstan's, where they were re-educating the blinded soldiers.

The other hesitated a moment, and then said rather

awkwardly, "Oh, I'm just home for a little while; I only got here this morning, in fact."

Skipworth noted the hesitation. Did the old people get panicky at the thought of entertaining a wild man from Virginia, and send an S O S for Gerald, he wondered.

"We are so glad you could come to us," Lady Sherwood said rather hastily just then. And again he could not fail to note that she was prompting her husband.

The latter reluctantly turned round, and said, "Yes, yes, quite so. Welcome to Bishopsthorpe, my boy," as if his wife had pulled a string, and he responded mechanically, without quite knowing what he said. Then, as his eyes rested a moment on his guest, he looked as if he would like to bolt out of the room. He controlled himself, however, and, jerking round again to the fireplace, went on murmuring, "Yes, yes, yes," vaguely—just like the dormouse at the Mad Tea-Party, who went to sleep, saying, "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle," Cary could not help thinking to himself.

But after all, it wasn't really funny, it was pathetic. Gosh, how doddering the poor old boy was! Skipworth wondered, with a sudden twist at his heart, if the war was playing the deuce with his home people, too. Was his own father going to pieces like this, and had his mother's gay vivacity fallen into that still remoteness of Lady Sherwood's? But of course not! The Carys hadn't suffered as the poor Sherwoods had, with their youngest son, Curtin, killed early in the war, and now Gerald knocked out so tragically. Lord, he thought, how they must all bank on Chev! And of course they would want to hear at once about him. "I left Chev as fit as anything, and he sent all sorts of messages," he reported, thinking it more discreet to deliver Chev's messages thus vaguely than to repeat his actual carefree remark, which had been, "Oh, tell 'em I'm jolly as a tick."

But evidently there was something wrong with the words as they were, for instantly he was aware of that curious sense of withdrawal on their part. Hastily reviewing them, he decided that they had sounded too

familiar from a stranger and a younger man like himself. He supposed he ought not to have spoken of Chev by his first name. Gee, what sticklers they were! Wouldn't his family—dad and mother and Nancy—have fairly lapped up any messages from him, even if they had been delivered a bit awkwardly? However, he added, as a concession to their point of view, "But of course, you'll have had later news of Captain Sherwood."

To which, after a pause, Lady Sherwood responded, "Oh, yes," in that remote and colourless voice which might have meant anything or nothing.

At this point dinner was announced.

Lady Sherwood drew her husband away from the empty fireplace, and Gerald slipped his arm through the Virginian's, saying pleasantly, "I'm learning to carry on fairly well at St. Dunstan's, but I confess I still like to have a pilot."

To look at the tall young fellow beside him, whose scarred face was so reminiscent of Chev's untouched good looks, who had known all the immense freedom of the air, but who was now learning to carry on in the dark, moved Skipworth Carey to generous homage.

"You know my saying I'm glad to meet you isn't just American," he said half shyly, but warmly. "It's plain English, and the straight truth. I've wanted to meet you awfully. The oldsters are always holding up your glorious exploits to us newcomers. Withers never gets tired telling about that fight of yours with the four enemy planes. And besides," he rushed on eagerly, "I'm glad to have a chance to tell Chev's brother —Captain Sherwood's brother, I mean—what I think of him. Only as a matter of fact, I can't," he broke off with a laugh. "I can't put it exactly into words, but I tell you I'd follow that man straight into hell and out the other side—or go there alone if he told me to. He is the finest chap that ever flew."

And then he felt as if a cold douche had been flung in his face, for after a moment's pause, the other returned, "That's awfully good of you," in a voice so distant and formal that the Virginian could have kicked himself. What an ass he was to be so darned enthusias-

tic with an Englishman! He supposed it was bad form to show any pleasure over praise of a member of your family. Lord, if Chev got the V. C., he reckoned it would be awful to speak of it. Still, you would have thought Gerald might have stood for a little praise of him. But then, glancing sideways at his companion, he surprised on his face a look so strange and suffering that it came to him almost violently what it must be never to fly again; to be on the threshold of life, with endless days of blackness ahead. Good God! How cruel he had been to flaunt Chev in his face! In remorseful and hasty reparation he stumbled on, "But the old fellows are always having great discussions as to which was the best—you or your brother. Withers always maintains you were."

"Withers lies, then!" the other retorted. "I never touched Chev—never came within a mile of him, and never could have."

They reached the dinner-table with that, and young Cary found himself bewildered and uncomfortable. If Gerald hadn't liked praise of Chev, he had liked praise of himself even less, it seemed.

Dinner was not a success. The Virginian found that, if there was to be conversation, the burden of carrying it on was upon him, and gosh! they don't mind silences in this man's island, do they? he commented desperately to himself, thinking how different it was from America. Why, there they acted as if silence was an egg that had just been laid, and everyone had to cackle at once to cover it up. But here the talk constantly fell to the ground, and nobody but himself seemed concerned to pick it up. His attempt to praise Chev had not been successful, and he could understand their not wanting to hear about flying and the war before Gerald.

So at last, in desperation, he wandered off into descriptions of America, finding to his relief, that he had struck the right note at last. They were glad to hear about the States, and Lady Sherwood inquired politely if the Indians still gave them much trouble; and when he assured her that in Virginia, except for the Pocahontas tribe, they were all pretty well subdued, she

accepted his statement with complete innocency. And he was so delighted to find at last a subject to which they were evidently cordial, that he was quite carried away, and wound up by inviting them all to visit his family in Richmond, as soon as the war was over.

Gerald accepted at once, with enthusiasm; Lady Sherwood made polite murmurs, smiling at him in quite a warm and almost, indeed, maternal manner. Even Sir Charles, who had been staring at the food on his plate as if he did not quite know what to make of it, came to the surface long enough to mumble, "Yes, yes, very good idea. Countries must carry on together— What?"

But that was the only hit of the whole evening, and when the Virginian retired to his room, as he made an excuse to do early, he was so confused and depressed that he fell into an acute attack of homesickness.

Heavens, he thought, as he tumbled into bed, just suppose, now, this was little old Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A., instead of being Bishopsthorpe, Avery Cross near Wick, and all the rest of it! And at that, he grinned to himself. England wasn't such an all-fired big country that you'd think they'd have to ticket themselves with addresses a yard long, for fear they'd get lost—now, would you? Well, anyway, suppose it was Richmond, and his train just pulling into the Byrd Street Station. He stretched out luxuriously, and let his mind picture the whole familiar scene. The wind was blowing right, so there was the mellow homely smell of tobacco in the streets, and plenty of people all along the way to hail him with outstretched hands and shouts of "Hey, Skip Cary, when did you get back?" "Welcome home, my boy!" "Well, will you *look* what the cat dragged in!" And so he came to his own front door-step, and, walking straight in, surprised the whole family at breakfast; and yes—doggone it! if it wasn't Sunday, and they having waffles! And after that his obliging fancy bore him up Franklin Street, through Monroe Park, and so to Miss Sally Berkeley's door. He was sound asleep before he reached it, but in his dreams, light as a little bird, she came flying down the broad stairway to meet him, and—

But when he waked next morning, he did not find himself in Virginia, but in Devonshire, where, to his unbounded embarrassment, a white housemaid was putting up his curtains and whispering something about his bath. And though he pretended profound slumber, he was well aware that people do not turn brick-red in their sleep. And the problem of what was the matter with the Sherwood family was still before him.

II

"They're playing a game," he told himself after a few days. "That is, Lady Sherwood and Gerald are—poor old Sir Charles can't make much of a stab at it. The game is to make me think they are awfully glad to have me, when in reality there's something about me, or something I do, that gets them on the raw."

He almost decided to make some excuse and get away; but after all, that was not easy. In English novels, he remembered, they always had a wire calling them to London; but, darn it all! the Sherwoods knew mighty well there wasn't any one in London who cared a hoot about him.

The thing that got his goat most, he told himself, was that they apparently didn't like his friendship with Chev. Anyway they didn't seem to want him to talk about him; and whenever he tried to express his warm appreciation for all that the older man had done for him, he was instantly aware of a wall of reserve on their part, a holding of themselves aloof from him. That puzzled and hurt him, and put him on his dignity. He concluded that they thought it was cheeky of a youngster like him to think that a man like Chev could be his fricnd; and if that was the way they felt, he reckoned he'd jolly well better shut up about it.

But whatever it was that they didn't like about him, they most certainly did want him to have a good time. He and his pleasure appeared to be for the time being their chief consideration. And after the first day or so he began indeed to enjoy himself extremely. For one thing, he came to love the atmosphere of the old place

and of the surrounding country, which he and Gerald explored together. He liked to think that ancestors of his own had been inheritors of these green lanes, and pleasant mellow stretches. Then, too, after the first few days, he could not help seeing that they really began to like him, which of course was reassuring, and tapped his own warm friendliness, which was always ready enough to be released. And besides, he got by accident what he took to be a hint as to the trouble. He was passing the half-open door of Lady Sherwood's morning-room, when he heard Sir Charles's voice break out, "Good God, Elizabeth, I don't see how you stand it! When I see him so straight and fine-looking, and so untouched, beside our poor lad, and think—and think—"

Skipworth hurried out of earshot, but now he understood that look of aversion in the old man's eyes which had so startled him at first. Of course, the poor old boy might easily hate the sight of him beside Gerald. With Gerald himself he really got along famously. He was a most delightful companion, full of anecdotes and history of the countryside, every foot of which he had apparently explored in the old days with Chev and the younger brother, Curtin. Yet even with Gerald, Cary sometimes felt that aloofness and reserve, and that older protective air that they all showed him. Take, for instance, that afternoon when they were lolling together on the grass in the park. The Virginian, running on in his usual eager manner, had plunged without thinking into an account of a particularly daring bit of flying on Chev's part, when suddenly he realized that Gerald had rolled over on the grass and buried his face in his arms, and interrupted himself awkwardly. "But, of course," he said, "he must have written home about it himself."

"No, or if he did, I didn't hear of it. Go on," Gerald said in a muffled voice.

A great rush of compassion and remorse overwhelmed the Virginian, and he burst out penitently, "What a brute I am! I'm always forgetting and running on about flying, when I know it must hurt like the very devil!"

The other drew a difficult breath. "Yes," he admitted, "what you say does hurt in a way—in a way you can't understand. But all the same I like to hear you. Go on about Chev."

So Skipworth went on and finished his account, winding up, "I don't believe there's another man in the service who could have pulled it off—but I tell you your brother's one in a million."

"Good God, don't I know it!" the other burst out. "We were all three the jolliest pals together," he got out presently in a choked voice, "Chev and the young un and I; and now——"

He did not finish, but Cary guessed his meaning. Now the young un, Curtin, was dead, and Gerald himself knocked out. But, heavens! the Virginian thought, did Gerald think Chev would go back on him now on account of his blindness? Well, you could everlastingly bet he wouldn't!

"Chev thinks the world and all of you!" he cried in eager defense of his friend's loyalty. "Lots of times when we're all awfully jolly together, he makes some excuse and goes off by himself; and Withers told me it was because he was so frightfully cut up about you. Withers said he told him once that he'd a lot rather have got it himself—so you can everlastingly bank on him!"

Gerald gave a terrible little gasp. "I—I knew he'd feel like that," he got out. "We've always cared such a lot for each other." And then he pressed his face harder than ever into the grass, and his long body quivered all over. But not for long. In a moment he took fierce hold on himself, muttering, "Well, one must carry on, whatever happens," and apologized disjointedly. "What a fearful fool you must think me! And—and this isn't very pippy for you, old chap." Presently, after that, he sat up, and said, brushing it all aside, "We're facing the old moat, aren't we? There's an interesting bit of tradition about it that I must tell you."

And there you were, Cary thought: no matter how much Gerald might be suffering from his misfortune, he must carry on just the same, and see that his visitor

had a pleasant time. It made the Virginian feel like an outsider and very young, as if he were not old enough for them to show him their real feelings.

Another thing that he noticed was that they did not seem to want him to meet people. They never took him anywhere to call, and if visitors came to the house, they showed an almost panicky desire to get him out of the way. That again hurt his pride. What in heaven's name was the matter with him anyway!

III

However, on the last afternoon of his stay at Bishopsthorpe, he told himself with a rather rueful grin, that his manners must have improved a little, for they took him to tea at the rectory.

He was particularly glad to go there because, from certain jokes of Withers's, who had known the Sherwoods since boyhood, he gathered that Chev and the rector's daughter were engaged. And just as he would have liked Chev to meet Sally Berkeley, so he wanted to meet Miss Sybil Gaylord.

He had little hope of having a tête-à-tête with her, but as it fell out he did. They were all in the rectory garden together, Gerald and the rector a little behind Miss Gaylord and himself, as they strolled down a long walk with high hedges bordering it. On the other side of the hedge Lady Sherwood and her hostess still sat at the tea-table, and then it was that Cary heard Mrs. Gaylord say distinctly, "I'm afraid the strain has been too much for you—you should have let us have him."

To which Lady Sherwood returned quickly, "Oh, no, that would have been impossible with——"

"Come—come this way—I must show you the view from the arbor," Miss Gaylord broke in breathlessly; and laying a hand on his arm, she turned him abruptly into a side path.

Glancing down at her, the Southerner could not but note the panic and distress in her fair face. It was so obvious that the overheard words referred to him, and he was so bewildered by the whole situation, that

he burst out impulsively, "I say, what *is* the matter with me? Why do they find me so hard to put up with? Is it something I do—or don't they like Americans? Honestly, I wish you'd tell me."

She stood still at that, looking at him, her blue eyes full of distress and concern.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she cried. "They would be so sorry to have you think anything like that."

"But what is it?" he persisted. "Don't they like Americans?"

"Oh, no, it isn't that—Oh, quite the contrary!" she returned eagerly.

"Then it's something about me they don't like?"

"Oh, no, no! Least of all, that—*don't* think that!" she begged.

"But what am I to think then?"

"Don't think anything just yet," she pleaded. "Wait a little, and you will understand."

She was so evidently distressed that he could not press her further; and fearing she might think him unappreciative, he said, "Well, whatever it is, it hasn't prevented me from having a ripping good time. They've seen to that, and just done everything for my pleasure."

She looked up quickly, and to his relief he saw that for once he had said the right thing.

"You have enjoyed it, then?" she questioned eagerly.

"Most awfully," he assured her warmly. "I shall always remember what a happy leave they gave me."

She gave a little sigh of satisfaction, "I am so glad," she said. "They wanted you to have a good time—that was what we all wanted."

He looked at her gratefully, thinking how sweet she was in her fair English beauty, and how good to care that he should have enjoyed his leave. How different she was too from Sally Berkeley—why she would have made two of his little girl! And how quiet! Sallie Berkeley, with her quick glancing vivacity, would have been all around her and off again like a humming-bird before she could have uttered two words. And yet he was sure that they would have been friends, just as he and Chev were. Perhaps they all would be, after

the war. And then he began to talk about Chev, being sure that, had the circumstances been reversed, Sally Berkeley would have wanted news of him. Instantly he was aware of a tense listening stillness on her part. That pleased him. Well, she did care for the old fellow all right, he thought; and though she made no response, averting her face, and plucking nervously at the leaves of the hedge as they passed slowly along, he went on pouring out his eager admiration for his friend.

At last they came to a seat in an arbour, from which one looked out upon a green beneficent landscape. It was an intimate secluded little spot—and oh, if Sallie Berkeley were only there to sit beside him! And as he thought of this, it came to him whimsically that in all probability she must be longing for Chev, just as he was for Sally.

Dropping down on the bench beside her, he leaned over, and said with a friendly, almost brotherly, grin of understanding, "I reckon you're wishing Captain Sherwood was sitting here, instead of Lieutenant Cary."

The minute the impulsive words were out of his mouth, he knew he had blundered, been awkward, and inexcusably intimate. She gave a little choked gasp, and her blue eyes stared up at him, wide and startled. Good heavens, what a break he had made! No wonder the Sherwoods couldn't trust him in company! There seemed no apology that he could offer in words, but at least, he thought, he would show her that he would not have intruded on her secret without being willing to share his with her. With awkward haste he put his hand into his breast-pocket, and dragged forth the picture of Sally Berkeley he always carried there.

"This is the little girl I'm thinking about," he said, turning very red, yet boyishly determined to make amends, and also proudly confident of Sally Berkeley's charms. "I'd like mighty well for you two to know one another."

She took the picture in silence, and for a long moment stared down at the soft little face, so fearless, so confident and gay, that smiled appealingly back at her. Then she did something astonishing,—something which seemed to

him wholly un-English,—and yet he thought it the sweetest thing he had ever seen. Cupping her strong hands about the picture with a quick protectiveness, she suddenly raised it to her lips, and kissed it lightly. "O little girl!" she cried, "I hope you will be very happy!"

The little involuntary act, so tender, so sisterly and spontaneous, touched the Virginian extremely.

"Thanks, awfully," he said unsteadily. "She'll think a lot of that, just as I do—and I know she'd wish you the same."

She made no reply to that, and as she handed the picture back to him, he saw that her hands were trembling, and he had a sudden conviction that, if she had been Sally Berkeley, her eyes would have been full of tears. As she was Sybil Gaylord, however, there were no tears there, only a look that he never forgot. The look of one much older, protective, maternal almost, and as if she were gazing back at Sally Berkeley and himself from a long way ahead on the road of life. He supposed it was the way most English people felt nowadays. He had surprised it so often on all their faces, that he could not help speaking of it.

"You all think we Americans are awfully young and raw, don't you?" he questioned.

"Oh, no, not that," she deprecated. "Young perhaps for these days, yes—but it is more that you—that your country is so—so unsuffered. And we don't want you to suffer!" she added quickly.

Yes, that was it! He understood now, and, heavens, how fine it was! Old England was wounded deep—deep. What she suffered herself she was too proud to show; but out of it she wrought a great maternal care for the newcomer. Yes, it *was* fine—he hoped his country would understand.

Miss Gaylord rose. "There are Gerald and father looking for you," she said, "and I must go now." She held out her hand. "Thank you for letting me see her picture, and for everything you said about Captain Sherwood—for *everything,* remember—I want you to remember."

With a light pressure of her fingers she was gone,

slipping away through the shrubbery, and he did not see her again.

IV

So he came to his last morning at Bishopsthorpe; and as he dressed, he wished it could have been different; that he were not still conscious of that baffling wall of reserve between himself and Chev's people, for whom, despite all, he had come to have a real affection.

In the breakfast-room he found them all assembled, and his last meal there seemed to him as constrained and difficult as any that had preceded it. It was over finally, however, and in a few minutes he would be leaving.

"I can never thank you enough for the splendid time I've had here," he said as he rose. "I'll be seeing Chev to-morrow, and I'll tell him all about everything."

Then he stopped dead. With a smothered exclamation, old Sir Charles had stumbled to his feet, knocking over his chair, and hurried blindly out of the room; and Gerald said, "*Mother!*" in a choked appeal.

As if it were a signal between them, Lady Sherwood pushed her chair back a little from the table, her long delicate fingers dropped together loosely in her lap; she gave a faint sigh as if a restraining mantle slipped from her shoulders, and, looking up at the youth before her, her fine pale face lighted with a kind of glory, she said, "No, dear lad, no. You can never tell Chev, for he is gone."

"*Gone!*" he cried.

"Yes," she nodded back at him, just above a whisper; and now her face quivered, and the tears began to rush down her cheeks.

"Not *dead!*" he cried. "Not Chev—not that! O my God, Gerald, not *that!*"

"Yes," Gerald said. "They got him two days after you left."

It was so overwhelming, so unexpected and shocking, above all so terrible, that the friend he had so greatly loved and admired was gone out of his life forever,

that young Cary stumbled back into his seat, and, crumpling over, buried his face in his hands, making great uncouth gasps as he strove to choke back his grief.

Gerald groped hastily around the table, and flung an arm about his shoulders.

"Steady on, dear fellow, steady," he said, though his own voice broke.

"When did you hear?" Cary got out at last.

"We got the official notice just the day before you came—and Withers has written us particulars since."

"And you *let* me come in spite of it! And stay on, when every word I said about him must have—have fairly *crucified* each one of you! Oh, forgive me! forgive me!" he cried distractedly. He saw it all now; he understood at last. It was not on Gerald's account that they could not talk of flying and of Chev, it was because—because their hearts were broken over Chev himself. "Oh, forgive me!" he gasped again.

"Dear lad, there is nothing to forgive," Lady Sherwood returned. "How could we help loving your generous praise of our poor darling? We loved it, and you for it; we wanted to hear it, but we were afraid. We were afraid we might break down, and that you would find out."

The tears were still running down her cheeks. She did not brush them away now; she seemed glad to have them there at last.

Sinking down on his knees, he caught her hands. "Why did you *let* me do such a horrible thing?" he cried. "Couldn't you have trusted me to understand? Couldn't you *see* I loved him just as you did—No, no!" he broke down humbly. "Of course I couldn't love him as his own people did. But you must have seen how I felt about him—how I admired him, and would have followed him anywhere—and *of course* if I had known, I should have gone away at once."

"Ah, but that was just what we were afraid of," she said quickly. "We were afraid you would go away and have a lonely leave somewhere. And in these days a boy's leave is so precious a thing that nothing must spoil it—*nothing*," she reiterated; and her tears fell

upon his hands like a benediction. "But we didn't do it very well, I'm afraid," she went on presently, with gentle contrition. "You were too quick and understanding; you guessed there was something wrong. We were sorry not to manage better," she apologized.

"Oh, you wonderful, wonderful people!" he gasped. "Doing everything for my happiness, when all the time —all the time——"

His voice went out sharply, as his mind flashed back to scene after scene: to Gerald's long body lying quivering on the grass; to Sybil Gaylord wishing Sallie Berkeley happiness out of her own tragedy; and to the high look on Lady Sherwood's face. They seemed to him themselves, and yet more than themselves—shining bits in the mosaic of a great nation. Disjointedly there passed through his mind familiar words—"these are they who have washed their garments—having come out of great tribulation." No wonder they seemed older.

"We—we couldn't have done it in America," he said humbly.

He had a desperate desire to get away to himself; to hide his face in his arms, and give vent to the tears that were stifling him; to weep for his lost friend, and for this great heartbreaking heroism of theirs.

"But why did you do it?" he persisted. "Was it because I was his friend?"

"Oh, it was much more than that," Gerald said quickly. "It was a matter of the two countries. Of course, we jolly well knew you didn't belong to us, and didn't want to, but for the life of us we couldn't help a sort of feeling that you did. And when America was in at last, and you fellows began to come, you seemed like our very own come back after many years, and," he added, a throb in his voice, "we were most awfully glad to see you—we wanted a chance to show you how England felt."

Skipworth Cary rose to his feet. The tears for his friend were still wet upon his lashes. Stooping, he took Lady Sherwood's hands in his and raised them to his lips. "As long as I live, I shall never forget," he said.

"And others of us have seen it too in other ways—be sure America will never forget, either."

She looked up at his untouched youth out of her beautiful sad eyes, the exalted light still shining through her tears. "Yes," she said, "you see it was—I don't know exactly how to put it—but it was England to America."

"FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From *Pictorial Review*

WHEN Christopher Kain told me his story, sitting late in his dressing-room at the Philharmonic, I felt that I ought to say something, but nothing in the world seemed adequate. It was one of those times when words have no weight: mine sounded like a fly buzzing in the tomb of kings. And after all, he did not hear me; I could tell that by the look on his face as he sat there staring into the light, the lank, dark hair framing his waxen brow, his shoulders hanging forward, his lean, strong, sentient fingers wrapped around the brown neck of "Ugo," the 'cello, tightly.

Agnes Kain was a lady, as a lady was before the light of that poor worn word went out. Quiet, reserved, gracious, continent, bearing in face and form the fragile beauty of a rose-petal come to its fading on a windless ledge, she moved down the years with the stedfast sweetness of the gentlewoman—gentle, and a woman.

They knew little about her in the city, where she had come with her son. They did not need to. Looking into her eyes, into the transparent soul behind them, they could ask no other credential for the name she bore and the lavender she wore for the husband of whom she never spoke.

She spoke of him, indeed, but that was in privacy, and to her son. As Christopher grew through boyhood, she watched him; in her enveloping eagerness she fore-

stalled the hour when he would have asked, and told him about his father, Daniel Kain.

It gave them the added bond of secret-sharers. The tale grew as the boy grew. Each night when Christopher crept into his mother's bed for the quiet hour of her voice, it was as if he crept in to another world, the wind-blown, sky-encompassed kingdom of the Kains, Daniel, his father, and Maynard, *his* father, another Maynard before *him,* and all the Kains—and the Hill and the House, the Willow Wood, the Moor Under the Cloud, the Beach where the gray seas pounded, the boundless Marsh, the Lilac-hedge standing against the stars.

He knew he would have to be a man of men to measure up to that heritage, a man strong, grave, thoughtful, kind with the kindness that never falters, brave with the courage of that dark and massive folk whose blood ran in his veins. Coming as it did, a world of legend growing up side by side with the matter-of-fact world of Concord Street, it was made to fit in with all things natural, and it never occurred to him to question. He, the boy, was *not* massive, strong, or brave; he saw things in the dark that frightened him, his thin shoulders were bound to droop, the hours of practise on his violin left him with no blood in his legs and a queer pallor on his brow.

Nor was he always grave, thoughtful, kind. He did not often lose his temper, the river of his young life ran too smooth and deep. But there were times when he did. Brief passions swept him, blinded him, twisted his fingers, left him sobbing, retching, and weak as death itself. He never seemed to wonder at the discrepancy in things, however, any more than he wondered at the look in his mother's eyes, as she hung over him, waiting, in those moments of nausea after rage. She had not the look of the gentlewoman then; she had more the look, a thousand times, of the prisoner led through the last gray corridor in the dawn.

He saw her like that once when he had not been angry. It was on a day when he came into the front hall unexpectedly as a stranger was going out of the door. The stranger was dressed in rough, brown homespun; in one

hand he held a brown velour hat, in the other a thorn stick without a ferrule. Nor was there anything more worthy of note in his face, an average-long face with hollowed cheeks, sunken gray eyes, and a high forehead, narrow, sallow, and moist.

No, it was not the stranger that troubled Christopher. It was his mother's look at his own blundering entrance, and, when the man was out of hearing, the tremulous haste of her explanation.

"He came about some papers, you know."

"You mean our *Morning Post?*" Christopher asked her.

She let her breath out all at once and colour flooded her face.

"Yes," she told him. "Yes, yes."

Neither of them said anything more about it.

It was that same day, toward evening, that Christopher broke one of his long silences, reverting to a subject always near to them both.

"Mother, you've never told me where it is—on the *map,* I mean."

She was looking the other way. She did not turn around.

"I—Chris—I—I haven't a map in the house."

He did not press the matter. He went out into the back yard presently, under the grape-trellis, and there he stood still for a long time, staring at nothing in particular.

He was growing up.

He went away to boarding-school not long after this, taking with him the picture of his adored mother, the treasured epic of his dark, strong fathers, his narrow shoulders, his rare, blind bursts of passion, his newborn wonder, and his violin. At school they thought him a queer one.

The destinies of men are unaccountable things. Five children in the village of Deer Bay came down with diphtheria. That was why the academy shut up for a week, and that was what started Christopher on his way home for an unexpected holiday. And then it was only by one chance in a thousand that he should glimpse

his mother's face in the down-train halted at the Junction where he himself was changing.

She did not see him till he came striding along the aisle of her coach, his arms full of his things, face flushed, eyes brimming with the surprise and pleasure of seeing her; lips trembling questions.

"Why. Mother, what on earth? Where are you going? I'm to have a week at least, Mother; and here you're going away, and you didn't tell me, and what is it, and everything?"

His eager voice trailed off. The colour drained out of his face and there was a shadow in his eyes. He drew back from her the least way.

"What is it, Mother? *Mother!*"

Somewhere on the platform outside the conductor's droning *"—board"* ran along the coaches. Agnes Kain opened her white lips.

"Get off before it's too late, Christopher. I haven't time to explain now. Go home, and Mary will see you have everything. I'll be back in a day or so. Kiss me, and go quickly. Quickly!"

He did not kiss her. He would not have kissed her for worlds. He was too bewildered, dazed, lost, too inexpressibly hurt. On the platform outside, had she turned ever so little to look, she might have seen his face again for an instant as the wheels ground on the rails. Colour was coming back to it again, a murky colour like the shadow of a red cloud.

They must have wondered, in the coach with her, at the change in the calm, unobtrusive, well-gowned gentlewoman, their fellow-passenger. Those that were left after another two hours saw her get down at a barren station where an old man waited in a carriage. The halt was brief, and none of them caught sight of the boyish figure that slipped down from the rearmost coach to take shelter for himself and his dark, tempest-ridden face behind the shed at the end of the platform—

Christopher walked out across a broad, high, cloudy plain, following a red road, led by the dust-feather hanging over the distant carriage.

He walked for miles, creeping ant-like between the

immensities of the brown plain and the tumbled sky. Had he been less implacable, less intent, he might have noticed many things, the changing conformation of the clouds, the far flight of a gull, the new perfume and texture of the wind that flowed over his hot temples. But as it was, the sea took him by surprise. Coming over a little rise, his eyes focused for another long, dun fold of the plain, it seemed for an instant as if he had lost his balance over a void; for a wink he felt the passing of a strange sickness. He went off a little way to the side of the road and sat down on a flat stone.

The world had become of a sudden infinitely simple, as simple as the inside of a cup. The land broke down under him, a long, naked slope fringed at the foot of a ribbon of woods. Through the upper branches he saw the shingles and chimneys of a pale grey village clinging to a white beach, a beach which ran up to the left in a bolder flight of cliffs, showing on their crest a cluster of roofs and dull-green gable-ends against the sea that lifted vast, unbroken, to the rim of the cup.

Christopher was fifteen, and queer even for that queer age. He had a streak of the girl in him at his adolescence, and, as he sat there in a huddle, the wind coming out of this huge new gulf of life seemed to pass through him, bone and tissue, and tears rolled down his face.

The carriage bearing his strange mother was gone, from sight and from mind. His eyes came down from the lilac-crowned hill to the beach, where it showed in white patches through the wood, and he saw that the wood was of willows. And he remembered the plain behind him, the wide, brown moor under the cloud. He got up on his wobbly legs. There were stones all about him in the whispering wire-grass, and like them the one he had been sitting on bore a blurred inscription. He read it aloud, for some reason, his voice borne away faintly on the river of air:

Here Lie The Earthly Remains Of
MAYNARD KAIN, SECOND
Born 1835—Died 1863 For the Preservation of the Union

His gaze went on to another of those worn stones.

MAYNARD KAIN, ESQUIRE
1819—1849

This Monument Erected In His Memory By His Sorrowing Widow, Harriet Burnam Kain

The windy Gales of the West Indias
Laid Claim to His Noble Soul
And Took him on High to his Creator
Who made him Whole.

There was no moss or lichen on this wind-scoured slope. In the falling dusk the old white stones stood up like the bones of the dead themselves, and the only sound was the rustle of the wire-grass creeping over them in a dry tide. The boy had taken off his cap; the sea-wind moving under the mat of his damp hair gave it the look of some somber, outlandish cowl. With the night coming on, his solemnity had an elfin quality. He found what he was looking for at last, and his fingers had to help his eyes.

DANIEL KAIN

Beloved Husband of Agnes Willoughby Kain
Born 1860—Died 1886

Forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Christopher Kain told me that he left the naked graveyard repeating it to himself, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do," conscious less of the words than of the august rhythm falling in with the pulse of his exaltation.

The velvet darkness that hangs under cloud had come down over the hill and the great marsh stretching away to the south of it. Agnes Kain stood in the open doorway, one hand on the brown wood, the other pressed to her cheek.

"You heard it *that* time, Nelson?"

"No, ma'am." The old man in the entrance-hall be-

hind her shook his head. In the thin, blown light of the candelabra which he held high, the worry and doubt of her deepened on his singularly-unlined face.

"And you might well catch your death in that draft, ma'am."

But she only continued to stare out between the pillars where the lilac-hedge made a wall of deeper blackness across the night.

"What am I thinking of?" she whispered, and then: "*There!*"

And this time the old man heard it, a nearer, wind-blown hail.

"Mother! Oh, Mother!"

The boy came striding through the gap of the gate in the hedge.

"It's I, Mother! Chris! Aren't you surprised?"

She had no answer. As he came she turned and moved away from the door, and the old man, peering from under the flat candle-flames, saw her face like wax. And he saw the boy, Christopher, in the doorway, his hands flung out, his face transfigured.

"Mother! I'm here! Don't you understand?"

He touched her shoulder. She turned to him, as it were, lazily.

"Yes," she breathed. "I see."

He threw his arms about her, and felt her shaking from head to foot. But he was shaking, too.

"I knew the way!" he cried. "I knew it, Mother, I knew it! I came down from the Moor and there was the Willow Wood, and I knew the way home. And when I came, Mother, it was like the trees bowing down their branches in the dark. And when I came by the Beach, Mother, it was like a roll of drums beating for me, and when I came to the Hill I saw the Hedge standing against the sky, and I came, and here I am!"

She expressed no wonder, asked no question.

"Yes," was all she said, and it was as if she spoke of a tree coming to its leaf, the wind to its height, the tide to its flood.

Had he been less rapt and triumphant he must have wondered more at that icy lassitude, and at the cloak of

ceremony she wrapped about her to hide a terror. It was queer to hear the chill urbanity of her: "This is Christopher, Nelson; Christopher, this is your father's servant, Nelson." It was queerer still to see the fastidious decorum with which she led him over this, the familiar house of his fathers.

He might have been a stranger, come with a guide-book in his hand. When he stood on his heels in the big drawing-room, staring up with all his eyes at the likenesses of those men he had known so well, it was strange to hear her going on with all the patter of the gallery attendant, names of painters, prices, dates. He stood before the portrait of Daniel Kain, his father, a dark-skinned, longish face with a slightly-protruding nether lip, hollow temples, and a round chin, deeply cleft. As in all the others, the eyes, even in the dead pigment, seemed to shine with an odd, fixed luminosity of their own, and like the others from first to last of the line, it bore upon it the stamp of an imperishable youth. And all the while he stood there, drinking it in, detail by detail, his mother spoke, not of the face, but of the frame, some obscure and unsuspected excellence in the gold-leaf on the frame.

More than once in that stately tour of halls and chambers he found himself protesting gaily, "I know, Mother! I know, I know!"

But the contagion of his glory did not seem to touch her. Nothing seemed to touch her. Only once was the fragile, bright shell of her punctilio penetrated for a moment, and that was when Christopher, lagging, turned back to a door they were about to pass and threw it open with the happy laugh of a discoverer. And then, even before she could have hushed him, the laughter on his lips died of itself.

A man lay on a bed in the room, his face as colourless and still as the pillow behind it. His eyes were open, but they did not move from the three candles burning on the high bureau, and he seemed unconscious of any intrusion.

"I didn't know!" Christopher whispered, shocked, and shamed.

When the door was closed again his mother explained. She explained at length, concisely, standing quite still, with one frail, fine hand worrying the locket she wore at her throat. Nelson stood quite still too, his attention engrossed in his candle-wicks. And Christopher stood quite still, and all their shadows— That man was the caretaker, the man, Christopher was to understand, who had been looking after the place. His name was Sanderson. He had fallen ill, very ill. In fact, he was dying. And that was why his mother had had to come down, post-haste, without warning. To see about some papers. Some papers. Christopher was to understand——.

Christopher understood. Indeed there was not much to understand. And yet, when they had gone on, he was bothered by it. Already, so young he was, so ruthless, and so romantic, he had begun to be a little ashamed of that fading, matter-of-fact world of Concord Street. And it was with just that world which he wished to forget, that the man lying ill in the candle-lit chamber was linked in Christopher's memory. For it was the same man he had seen in the doorway that morning months ago, with a brown hat in one hand and a thorn stick in the other.

Even a thing like that may be half put aside, though —for a while. And by the time Christopher went to his room for the night the thought of the interloper had retired into the back of his mind, and they were all Kains there on the Hill, inheritors of romance. He found himself bowing to his mother with a courtliness he had never known, and an "I wish you a good night," sounding a century old on his lips. He saw the remote, patrician figure bow as gravely in return, a petal of colour as hard as paint on the whiteness of either cheek. He did not see her afterward, though, when the merciful door was closed.

Before he slept he explored the chamber, touching old objects with reverent finger-tips. He came on a leather case like an absurdly overgrown beetle, hidden in a corner, and a violoncello was in it. He had seen such things before, but he had never touched one, and when

he lifted it from the case he had a moment of feeling very odd at the pit of his stomach. Sitting in his underthings on the edge of the bed, he held the wine-coloured creature in the crook of his arm for a long time, the look in his round eyes, half eagerness, half pain, of one pursuing the shadow of some ghostly and elusive memory.

He touched the C-string by and by with an adventuring thumb. I have heard "Ugo" sing, myself, and I know what Christopher meant when he said that the sound did not come out of the instrument, but that it came *in* to it, sweeping home from all the walls and corners of the chamber, a slow, rich, concentric wind of tone. He felt it about him, murmurous, pulsating, like the sound of surf borne from some far-off coast.

And then it was like drums, still farther off. And then it was the feet of marching men, massive, dark, grave men with luminous eyes, and the stamp on their faces of an imperishable youth.

He sat there so lost and rapt that he heard nothing of his mother's footsteps hurrying in the hall; knew nothing till he saw her face in the open doorway. She had forgotten herself this time; that fragile defense of gentility was down. For a moment they stared at each other across a gulf of silence, and little by little the boy's cheeks grew as white as hers, his hands as cold, his lungs as empty of breath.

"What is it, Mother?"

"Oh, Christopher, Christopher—— Go to bed, dear."

He did not know why, but of a sudden he felt ashamed and a little frightened, and, blowing out the candle, he crept under the covers.

The afternoon was bright with a rare sun and the world was quiet. Christopher lay full-spread on the turf, listening idly to the "clip-clip" of Nelson's shears as the old man trimmed the hedge.

"And was my father *very* strong?" he asked with a drowsy pride.

"No, not so very." Nelson stopped clipping and was immediately lost in the past.

"Only when he was *that* way five strong men couldn't

turn him. I'll say that. No, if they had to get him with a shotgun that day, 'twas nobody's fault nor sin. If Guy Bullard seen Daniel there on the sand with an ax in his hand and foam-like on his lips, and the little ones cornered where he caught them between cliff and water —Guy's own baby amongst them—and knowing the sickness of the Kains as he and everybody else did—why, I'm free and willing to say 'twas his bounden duty to hold a true aim and pull a steady trigger on Daniel, man of his though I was, and man of his poor father before him——

"No, I can't make it right to lay blame on any man for it, no more than I can on them, his brother officers, that broke Maynard's neck with their tent-pegs the night after Gettysburg. No, no——"

It was evidently a time-worn theme, an argument, an *apologia,* accepted after years of bitterness and self-searching. He went on with the remote serenity of age, that has escaped the toils of passion, pursuing the old, worn path of his mind, his eyes buried in vacancy.

"No, 'twas a mercy to the both of them, father and son, and a man must see it so. 'Twould be better of course if they could have gone easier, same as the *old* Maynard went, thinking himself the Lord our God to walk on the water and calm the West Indy gale. That's better, better for all hands round. But if it had to come so, in violence and fear, then nobody need feel the sin of it on his soul—nobody excepting the old man Bickers, him that told Daniel. For 'twas from that day he began to take it on.

"I saw it myself. There was Daniel come home from other parts where his mother had kept him, out of gossip's way, bright as you please and knowing nothing wrong with the blood of the Kains. And so I say the sin lays on the loose-wagging tongue of Bickers, for from the day he let it out to Daniel, Daniel changed. 'Twas like he'd heard his doom, and went to it. Bickers is dead a long time now, but may the Lord God lay eternal damnation on his soul!"

Even then there was no heat; the curse had grown a formula. Having come to the end, the old man's

eyes tumbled down painlessly out of the void and discovered the shears in his hand.

"Dear me, that's so," he said to himself. One thought was enough at a time. He fell to work again. The steady "clip-clip-clip" moved off slowly along the hedge. Not once did he remember; not once as the indefatigable worker shuffled himself out of sight around the house did he look back with any stirring of recollection at the boyish figure lying there as still as a shadow cast in the deep grass.

A faintly lop-sided moon swam in the zenith. For three days now that rare clarity had hung in the sky, and for three nights the moon had grown. Its benign, poisonous illumination flowed down steeply through the windows of the dark chamber where Christopher huddled on the bed's edge, three pale, chill islands spread on the polished floor.

Once again the boy brought the bow home across the shivering strings, and, as if ears could be thirsty as a drunkard's throat, he drank his fill of the 'cello's deep, full-membered chord. The air was heavy with the resonance of marching feet, ghostly feet marching and marching down upon him in slow, inexorable crescendo as the tides ebbed later among the sedges on the marsh and the moon grew big. And above the pulse of the march he seemed to hear another cadence, a thin laughter.

He laughed too, giving himself up to that spectral contagion. He saw the fat, iridescent bubble with the Hill in it, the House of dreams, the Beach and the Moor and Willow Wood of fancy, and all the grave, strong, gentle line of Kains to whom he had been made bow down in worship. He saw himself taken in, soul and body, by a thin-plated fraud, a cheap trick of mother's words, as before him, his father had been. And the faint exhalations from the moon-patches on the floor showed his face contorted with a still, set grimace of mirth.

Anger came over him in a white veil, twitching his lips and his toes and bending his fingers in knots. Through the veil a sound crept, a sound he knew well

by this time, secret footfalls in the hall, faltering, retreating, loitering, returning to lag near the door.

How he hated her! It is curious that not once did his passion turn against his blighted fathers; it was against the woman who had borne him, the babe, and lied to him, the boy—against her, and against that man, that interloper, dying in a room below.

The thought that had been willing to creep out of sight into the back-country of his mind on that first night came out now like a red, devouring cloud. Who was that man?

What was he dying of—or *supposed* to be dying of? What had he been doing that morning in Concord Street? What was he doing here, in the house of the men who had never grown old and of the boy who would never grow old? Why had his mother come down here, where he was, so queerly, so secretly, so frightened?

Christopher would have liked to kill that man. He shivered and licked his lips. He would have liked to do something bloody and abominable to that face with the hollow cheeks, the sunken grey eyes, and the forehead, high, sallow, and moist. He would have liked to take an ax in his hand and run along the thundering beach and catch that face in a corner somewhere between cliff and water. The desire to do this thing possessed him and blinded him like the kiss of lightning.

He found himself on the floor at the edge of the moonlight, full of weakness and nausea. He felt himself weeping as he crawled back to the bed, his cheeks and neck bathed in a flood of painless tears. He threw himself down, dazed with exhaustion.

It seemed to him that his mother had been calling a long while. "Christopher! What is it? What is it, boy?"

He had heard no footsteps, going or coming; she must have been there all the time, waiting, listening, her ear pressed to the thick, old paneling of the door. The thought was like wine; the torment of her whispering was sweet in his ears.

"Oh, Chris, Chris! You're making yourself sick!"

"Yes," he said. He lifted on an elbow and repeated

it in a voice which must have sounded strange enough to the listener beyond the door. "Yes!" he said. "Yes!"

"Go away!" he cried of a sudden, making a wide, dim, imperious gesture in the dark.

"No, no," the imploring whisper crept in. "You're making yourself sick—Christopher—all over nothing—nothing in the world. It's so foolish—so foolish—foolish! Oh, if I could only tell you, Christopher—if I could tell you——"

"Tell me *what?*" He shuddered with the ecstasy of his own irony. "Who that man is? That 'caretaker'? What he's doing here? What *you're* doing here?——" He began to scream in a high, brittle voice: "*Go away from that door! Go away!*"

This time she obeyed. He heard her retreating, soft-footed and frightened, along the hall. She was abandoning him—without so much as trying the door, just once again, to see if it were still bolted against her.

She did not care. She was sneaking off—down the stairs—Oh, yes, he knew where.

His lips began to twitch again and his finger-nails scratched on the bedclothes. If only he had something, some weapon, an axe, a broad, keen, glittering axe! He would show them! He was strong, incredibly strong! Five men could not have turned him back from what he was going to do—if only he had something.

His hand, creeping, groping, closed on the neck of the 'cello leaning by the bed. He laughed.

Oh, yes, he would stop her from going down there; he would hold her, just where she was on the dark stair, nerveless, breathless, as long as he liked, if he liked he would bring her back, cringing, begging.

He drew the bow, and laughed higher and louder yet to hear the booming discord rocking in upon him from the shadows. Swaying from side to side, he lashed the hollow creature to madness. They came in the press of the gale, marching, marching, the wild, dark pageant of his fathers, nearer and nearer through the moon-struck night.

"Tell me *what?*" he laughed. "*What?*"

And abruptly he slept, sprawled crosswise on the covers, half-clothed, dishevelled, triumphant.

It was not the same night, but another; whether the next or the next but one, or two, Christopher can not say. But he was out of doors.

He had escaped from the house at dusk; he knew that.

He had run away, through the hedge and down the back side of the hill, torn between the two, the death, warm and red like life, and the birth, pale, chill, and inexorable as death.

Most of that daft night-running will always be blank in Christopher's mind; moments and moments, like islands of clarity, remain. He brings back one vivid interval when he found himself seated on his father's gravestone among the whispering grasses, staring down into the pallid bowl of the world. And in that moment he knew what Daniel Kain had felt, and Maynard Kain before him; a passionate and contemptuous hatred for all the dullards in the world who never dreamed dreams or saw visions or sang wordless songs or ran naked-hearted in the flood of the full-blown moon. He hated them because they could not by any possibility comprehend his magnificent separation, his starry sanity, his kinship with the gods. And he had a new thirst to obliterate the whole creeping race of dust-dwellers with one wide, incomparably bloody gesture.

It was late when he found himself back again before the house, and an ink-black cloud touched the moon's edge. After the airless evening a wind had sprung up in the east; it thrashed among the lilac-stems as he came through them and across the turf, silent-footed as an Indian. In his right hand he had a bread-knife, held butt to thumb, dagger-wise. Where he had come by the rust-bitten thing no one knows, least of all himself. In the broken light his eyes shone with a curious luminosity of their own, absorbed, introspective.

All the windows were dark, and the entrance-hall, when he slipped in between the pillars, but across its

floor he saw light thrown in a yellow ribbon from the half-closed door of the drawing-room.

It took his attention, laid hands on his imagination. He began to struggle against it.

He would *not* go into that room. He was going to another room. To stay him, he made a picture of the other room in his tumbled mind—the high, bleak walls, the bureau with the three candles burning wanly, the bed, the face of the man on the bed. And when his rebellious feet, surrendering him up to the lure of that beckoning ribbon, had edged as far as the door, and he had pushed it a little further ajar to get his head in, he saw that the face itself was there in the drawing-room.

He stood there for some time, his shoulder pressed against the door-jamb, his eyes blinking.

His slow attention moved from the face to the satin pillows that wedged it in, and then to the woman that must have been his mother, kneeling beside the casket with her arms crooked on the shining cover and her head down between them. And across from her leaned "Ugo," the 'cello, come down from his chamber to stand vigil at the other shoulder of the dead.

The first thing that came into his groping mind was a bitter sense of abandonment. The little core of candle-light hanging in the gloom left him out. Its unstirring occupants, the woman, the 'cello, and the clay, seemed sufficient to themselves. His mother had forgotten him. Even "Ugo," that had grown part and parcel of his madness, had forgotten him.

Bruised, sullen, moved by some deep-lying instinct of the clan, his eyes left them and sought the wall beyond, where there were those who would not forget him, come what might, blood of his blood and mind of his own queer mind. And there among the shadowed faces he searched for one in vain. As if that candle-lit tableau, somehow holy and somehow abominable, were not for the eyes of one of them, the face of Daniel, the wedded husband, had been turned to the wall.

Here was something definite, something Christopher could take hold of, and something that he would not have.

F other seemed not to have known he was near a h[illegible]ung the door back and came stalking into the light with the rusty bread-knife in his hand. One would not have imagined there were blood enough left in her wasted heart, but her face went crimson when she lifted it and saw him.

It brought him up short—the blush, where he had looked for fright. It shocked him, and, shocking him, more than by a thousand laboured words of explanation, it opened a window in his disordered brain. He stood gawking with the effort of thought, hardly conscious of his mother's cry:

"Christopher, I never meant you to know!"

He kept on staring at the ashen face between the pillows, long (as his own was long), sensitive, worn; and at the 'cello keeping incorruptible vigil over its dead. And then slowly his eyes went down to his own left hand, to which that same old wine-brown creature had come home from the first with a curious sense of fitness and authority and right.

"Who is this man?"

"Don't look at me so! Don't, Chris!"

But he did look at her. Preoccupied as he was, he was appalled at sight of the damage the half-dozen of days had done. She had been so much the lady, so perfectly the gentlewoman. To no one had the outward gesture and symbol of purity been more precious. No whisper had ever breathed against her. If there had been secrets behind her, they had been dead; if a skeleton, the closet had been closed. And now, looking down on her, he was not only appalled, he was a little sickened, as one might be to find squalor and decay creeping into a familiar and once immaculate room.

"Who is this man?" he repeated.

"He grew up with me." She half raised herself on her knees in the eagerness of her appeal. "We were boy and girl together at home in Maryland. We were meant for each other, Chris. We were always to marry—always, Chis. And when I went away, and when I married your—when I married Daniel Kain, *he*

hunted and he searched and he found me here. was with me, he stood by me through that awful year-and—that was how it happened. I tell you, Christopher, darling, we were meant for each other, John Sanderson and I. He loved me more than poor Daniel ever did or could, loved me enough to throw away a life of promise, just to hang on here after every one else was gone, alone with his 'cello and his one little memory. And I loved him enough to—to—*Christopher, don't look at me so!*"

His eyes did not waver. You must remember his age, the immaculate, ruthless, mid-Victorian 'teens; and you must remember his bringing-up.

"And so this was my father," he said. And then he went on without waiting, his voice breaking into falsetto with the fierceness of his charge. "And you would have kept on lying to me! If I hadn't happened, just happened, to find you here, now, you would have gone on keeping me in the dark! You would have stood by and seen me—well—*go crazy!* Yes, go crazy, thinking I was—well, thinking I was meant for it! And all to save your precious——"

She was down on the floor again, what was left of the gentlewoman, wailing.

"But you don't know what it means to a woman, Chris! You don't know what it means to a woman!"

A wave of rebellion brought her up and she strained toward him across the coffin.

"Isn't it something, then, that I gave you a father with a *mind?* And if you think you've been sinned against, think of *me!* Sin! You call it *sin!* Well, isn't it *anything at all* that by my 'sin' my son's blood came down to him *clean?* Tell me that!"

He shook himself, and his flame turned to sullenness.

"It's not so," he glowered.

All the girl in him, the poet, the hero-worshipping boy, rebelled. His harassed eyes went to the wall beyond and the faces there, the ghosts of the doomed, glorious, youth-ridden line, priceless possessions of his dreams. He would not lose them: he refused to be robbed of a tragic birthright. He wanted some gesture

puissant enough to turn back and blot out all that had been told him.

"It's not his!" he cried. And reaching out fiercely he dragged the 'cello away from the coffin's side. He stood for an instant at bay, bitter, defiant.

"It's not his! It's mine! It's—it's—*ours!*"

And then he fled out into the dark of the entrance-hall and up the black stairs. In his room there was no moonlight now, for the cloud ran over the sky and the rain had come.

"It isn't so, it isn't so!" It was like a sob in his throat.

He struck on the full strings. And listening breathless through the dying discord he heard the liquid whispers of the rain, nothing more. He lashed with a wild bow, time and again. But something was broken, something was lost: out of the surf of sound he could no longer fashion the measure of marching feet. The mad Kains had found him out, and cast him out. No longer could he dream them in dreams or run naked-hearted with them in the flood of the moon, for he was no blood of theirs, and they were gone. And huddling down on the edge of the bed, he wept.

The tears washed his eyes and falling down bathed his strengthless hands. And beyond the phantom windows, over the marsh and the moor and the hill that were not his, the graves of strangers and the lost Willow Wood, lay the healing rain. He heard it in gurgling rivulets along the gutters overhead. He heard the soft impact, like a kiss, brushing the reedy cheeks of the marsh, the showery shouldering of branches, the aspiration of myriad drinking grasses, the far whisper of waters coming home to the waters of the sea—the long, low melody of the rain.

And by and by he found it was "Ugo," the 'cello, and he was playing.

They went home the following afternoon, he and his mother. Or rather, she went home, and he with her as far as the Junction, where he changed for school.

They had not much to say to each other through the journey. The boy had to be given time. Five years

younger, or fifteen years older, it would have been easier for him to look at his mother. You must remember what his mother had meant to him, and what, bound up still in the fierce and sombre battle of adolescence, she must mean to him now.

As for Agnes Kain, she did not look at him, either. Through the changing hours her eyes rested on the transparent hands lying crossed in her lap. She seemed very tired and very white. Her hair was not done as tidily, her lace cuffs were less fresh than they had used to be. About her whole presence there was a troubling hint of let-down, something obscurely slovenly, a kind of awkward and unlovely nakedness.

She really spoke to him for the first time at the Junction, when he stood before her, slim and uncouth under the huge burden of "Ugo," fumbling through his leave-taking.

"Christopher," she said, "try not to think of me—always—as—as—well, when you're older, Christopher, you'll know what I mean."

That was the last time he ever heard her speak. He saw her once again, but the telegram was delayed and his train was late, and when he came beside her bed she said nothing. She looked into his eyes searchingly, for a long while, and died.

That space stands for the interval of silence that fell after Christopher had told me the story. I thought he had quite finished. He sat motionless, his shoulders fallen forward, his eyes fixed in the heart of the incandescent globe over the dressing-table, his long fingers wrapped around the neck of the 'cello.

"And so she got me through those years," he said. "Those nip-and-tuck years that followed. By her lie.

"Insanity is a queer thing," he went on, still brooding into the light. "There's more of it about than we're apt to think. It works in so many ways. In hobbies, arts, philosophies. Music is a kind of insanity. I know. I've got mine penned up in the music now, and I think I can keep it there now, and save my soul."

"Yours?"

"Yes, mine. I know now—now that it's safe for me to know. I was down at that village by the beach a year or so ago. I'm a Kain, of course, one of the crazy Kains, after all. John Sanderson was born in the village and lived there till his death. Only once that folks could remember had he been away, and that was when he took some papers to the city for Mrs. Kain to sign. He was caretaker at the old 'Kain place' the last ten years of his life, and deaf, they said, since his tenth year—'deaf as a post.' And they told me something else. They said there was a story that before my father, Daniel, married her, my mother had been an actress. An actress! You'll understand that I needed no one to tell me *that*!

"They told me that they had heard a story that she was a *great* actress. Dear God, if they could only know! When I think of that night and that setting, that scene! It killed her, and it got me over the wall——"

THEY GRIND EXCEEDING SMALL

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

From *Saturday Evening Post*

I TELEPHONED down the hill to Hazen Kinch. "Hazen," I asked, "are you going to town to-day?"

"Yes, yes," he said abruptly in his quick, harsh fashion. "Of course I'm going to town."

"I've a matter of business," I suggested.

"Come along," he invited brusquely. "Come along."

There was not another man within forty miles to whom he would have given that invitation.

"I'll be down in ten minutes," I promised him; and I went to pull on my Pontiacs and heavy half boots over them and started downhill through the sandy snow. It was bitterly cold; it had been a cold winter. The bay—I could see it from my window—was frozen over for a dozen miles east and west and thirty north and south; and that had not happened in close to a score of years. Men were freighting across to the islands with heavy teams. Automobiles had beaten a rough road along the course the steamers took in summer. A man who had ventured to stock one of the lower islands with foxes for the sake of their fur, counting on the water to hold them prisoners, had gone bankrupt when his stock in trade escaped across the ice. Bitterly cold and steadily cold, and deep snow lay upon the hills, blue-white in the distance. The evergreens were blue-black blotches on this whiteness. The birches, almost indistinguishable, were like trees in camouflage. To me the hills are never so grand as in this winter coat they wear. It is easy to believe that a brooding God dwells upon them. I wondered as I ploughed my way down to Hazen Kinch's farm whether God did indeed

dwell among these hills; and I wondered what He thought of Hazen Kinch.

This was no new matter of thought with me. I had given some thought to Hazen in the past. I was interested in the man and in that which should come to him. He was, it seemed to me, a problem in fundamental ethics; he was, as matters stood, a demonstration of the essential uprightness of things as they are. The biologist would have called him a sport, a deviation from type, a violation of all the proper laws of life. That such a man should live and grow great and prosper was not fitting; in a well-regulated world it could not be. Yet Hazen Kinch did live; he had grown—in his small way—great; and by our lights he had prospered. Therefore I watched him. There was about the man the fascination which clothes a tight-rope walker above Niagara; an aeronaut in the midst of the nose dive. The spectator stares with half-caught breath, afraid to see and afraid to miss seeing the ultimate catastrophe. Sometimes I wondered whether Hazen Kinch suspected this attitude on my part. It was not impossible. There was a cynical courage in the man; it might have amused him. Certainly I was the only man who had in any degree his confidence.

I have said there was not another within forty miles whom he would have given a lift to town; I doubt if there was another man anywhere for whom he would have done this small favour.

He seemed to find a mocking sort of pleasure in my company.

When I came to his house he was in the barn harnessing his mare to the sleigh. The mare was a good animal, fast and strong. She feared and she hated Hazen. I could see her roll her eyes backward at him as he adjusted the traces. He called to me without turning:

"Shut the door! Shut the door! Damn the cold!"

I slid the door shut behind me. There was within the barn the curious chill warmth which housed animals generate to protect themselves against our winters.

"It will snow," I told Hazen. "I was not sure you would go."

He laughed crookedly, jerking at the trace.

"Snow!" he exclaimed. "A man would think you were personal manager of the weather. Why do you say it will snow?"

"The drift of the clouds—and it's warmer," I told him.

"I'll not have it snowing," he said, and looked at me and cackled. He was a little, thin, old man with meager whiskers and a curious precision of speech; and I think he got some enjoyment out of watching my expression at such remarks as this. He elaborated his assumption that the universe was conducted for his benefit, in order to see my silent revolt at the suggestion. "I'll not have it snowing," he said. "Open the door."

He led the mare out and stopped by the kitchen door.

"Come in," he said. "A hot drink."

I went with him into the kitchen. His wife was there, and their child. The woman was lean and frail; and she was afraid of him. The countryside said he had taken her in payment of a bad debt. Her father had owed him money which he could not pay.

"I decided it was time I had a wife," Hazen used to say to me.

The child was on the floor. The woman had a drink of milk and egg and rum, hot and ready for us. We drank, and Hazen knelt beside the child. A boy baby, not yet two years old. It is an ugly thing to say, but I hated this child. There was evil malevolence in his baby eyes. I have sometimes thought the grey devils must have left just such hate-bred babes as this in France. Also, he was deformed—a twisted leg. The women of the neighbourhood sometimes said he would be better dead. But Hazen Kinch loved him. He lifted him in his arms now with a curious passion in his movement, and the child stared at him sullenly. When the mother came near the baby squalled at her, and Hazen said roughly:

"Stand away! Leave him alone!"

She moved back furtively; and Hazen asked me, displaying the child: "A fine boy, eh?"

I said nothing, and in his cracked old voice he mum-

bled endearments to the baby. I had often wondered whether his love for the child redeemed the man; or merely made him vulnerable. Certainly any harm that might come to the baby would be a crushing blow to Hazen.

He put the child down on the floor again and he said to the woman curtly: "Tend him well." She nodded. There was a dumb submission in her eyes; but through this blank veil I had seen now and then a blaze of pain.

Hazen went out of the door without further word to her, and I followed him. We got into the sleigh, bundling ourselves into the robes for the six-mile drive along the drifted road to town. There was a feeling of storm in the air. I looked at the sky and so did Hazen Kinch. He guessed what I would have said and he answered me before I could speak.

"I'll not have it snowing," he said, and leered at me.

Nevertheless, I knew the storm would come. The mare turned out of the barnyard and ploughed through a drift and struck hard-packed road. Her hoofs beat a swift tattoo; our runners sang beneath us. We dropped to the little bridge and across and began the mile-long climb to the top of Rayborn Hill. The road from Hazen's house to town is compounded of such ups and downs.

At the top of the hill we paused for a moment to breathe the mare; paused just in front of the big old Rayborn house, that has stood there for more years than most of us remember. It was closed and shuttered and deserted; and Hazen dipped his whip toward it and said meanly:

"An ugly, improvident lot, the Rayborns were."

I had known only one of them—the eldest son. A fine man, I had thought him. Picking apples in his orchard, he fell one October and broke his neck. His widow tried to make a go of the place, but she borrowed of Hazen and he had evicted her this three months back. It was one of the lesser evils he had done. I looked at the house and at him, and he clucked to the

mare and we dipped down into the steep valley below the hill.

The wind had a sweep in that valley and there was a drift of snow across it and across the road. This drift was well packed by the wind, but when we drove over its top our left-hand runner broke through the coaming and we tumbled into the snow, Hazen and I. We were well entangled in the rugs. The mare gave a frightened start, but Hazen had held the reins and the whip so that she could not break away. We got up together, he and I, and we righted the sleigh and set it upon the road again. I remember that it was becoming bitter cold and the sun was no longer shining. There was a steel-grey veil drawn across the bay.

When the sleigh was upright Hazen went forward and stood beside the mare. Some men, blaming the beast without reason, would have beaten her. They would have cursed, cried out upon her. That was not the cut of Hazen Kinch. But I could see that he was angry and I was not surprised when he reached up and gripped the horse's ear. He pulled the mare's head down and twisted the ear viciously. All in a silence that was deadly.

The mare snorted and tried to rear back and Hazen clapped the butt of his whip across her knees. She stood still, quivering, and he wrenched at her ear again.

"Now," he said softly, "keep the road."

And he returned and climbed to his place beside me in the sleigh. I said nothing. I might have interfered, but something had always impelled me to keep back my hand from Hazen Kinch.

We drove on and the mare was lame. Though Hazen pushed her, we were slow in coming to town and before we reached Hazen's office the snow was whirling down—a pressure of driving, swirling flakes like a heavy white hand.

I left Hazen at the stair that led to his office and I went about my business of the day. He said as I turned away:

"Be here at three."

I nodded. But I did not think we should drive home that afternoon. I had some knowledge of storms.

That which had brought me to town was not engrossing. I found time to go to the stable and see Hazen's mare. There was an ugly welt across her knees and some blood had flowed. The stablemen had tended the welt, and cursed Hazen in my hearing. It was still snowing, and the stable boss, looking out at the driving flakes, spat upon the ground and said to me:

"Them legs'll go stiff. That mare won't go home to-night."

"I think you are right," I agreed.

"The white-whiskered skunk!" he said, and I knew he spoke of Hazen.

At a quarter of three I took myself to Hazen Kinch's office. It was not much of an office; not that Hazen could not have afforded a better. But it was up two flights—an attic room ill lighted. A small air-tight stove kept the room stifling hot. The room was also air-tight. Hazen had a table and two chairs, and an iron safe in the corner. He put a pathetic trust in that safe. I believe I could have opened it with a screw-driver. I met him as I climbed the stairs. He said harshly:

"I'm going to telephone. They say the road's impassable."

He had no telephone in his office; he used one in the store below. A small economy fairly typical of Hazen.

"I'll wait in the office," I told him.

"Go ahead," he agreed, halfway down the stairs.

I went up to his office and closed the drafts of the stove—it was red-hot—and tried to open the one window, but it was nailed fast. Then Hazen came back up the stairs grumbling.

"Damn the snow!" he said. "The wire is down."

"Where to?" I asked.

"My house, man! To my house!"

"You wanted to telephone home that you——"

"I can't get home to-night. You'll have to go to the hotel."

I nodded good-naturedly.

"All right. You, too, I suppose."

"I'll sleep here," he said.

I looked round. There was no bed, no cot, nothing but the two stiff chairs. He saw my glance and said angrily: "I've slept on the floor before."

I was always interested in the man's mental processes. "You wanted to telephone Mrs. Kinch not to worry?" I suggested.

"Pshaw, let her fret!" said Hazen. "I wanted to ask after my boy." His eyes expanded, he rubbed his hands a little, cackling. "A fine boy, sir! A fine boy!"

It was then we heard Doan Marshey coming up the stairs. We heard his stumbling steps as he began the last flight and Hazen seemed to cock his ears as he listened. Then he sat still and watched the door. The steps climbed nearer; they stopped in the dim little hall outside the door and someone fumbled with the knob. When the door opened we saw who it was. I knew Marshey. He lived a little beyond Hazen on the same road. Lived in a two-room cabin—it was little more—with his wife and his five children; lived meanly and pitiably, grovelling in the soil for daily bread, sweating life out of the earth—life and no more. A thin man, racking thin; a forward-thrusting neck and a bony face and a sad and drooping moustache about his mouth. His eyes were meek and weary.

He stood in the doorway blinking at us; and with his gloved hands—they were stiff and awkward with the cold—he unwound the ragged muffler that was about his neck and he brushed weakly at the snow upon his head and his shoulders. Hazen said angrily:

"Come in! Do you want my stove to heat the town?"

Doan shuffled in and he shut the door behind him. He said: "Howdy, Mr. Kinch." And he smiled in a humble and placating way.

Hazen said: "What's your business? Your interest is due."

Doan nodded.

"Yeah. I know, Mr. Kinch. I cain't pay it all."

Kinch exclaimed impatiently: "An old story! How much can you pay?"

"Eleven dollars and fifty cents," said Doan.

"You owe twenty."

"I aim to pay it when the hens begin to lay."

Hazen laughed scornfully.

"You aim to pay! Damn you, Marshey, if your old farm was worth taking I'd have you out in this snow, you old scamp!"

Doan pleaded dully: "Don't you do that, Mr. Kinch! I aim to pay."

Hazen clapped his hands on the table.

"Rats! Come! Give me what you've got! And, Marshey, you'll have to get the rest. I'm sick of waiting on you."

Marshey came shuffling toward the table. Hazen was sitting with the table between him and the man and I was a little behind Hazen at one side. Marshey blinked as he came nearer, and his weak nearsighted eyes turned from Hazen to me. I could see that the man was stiff with the cold.

When he came to the table in front of Hazen he took off his thick gloves. His hands were blue. He laid the gloves on the table and reached into an inner pocket of his torn coat and drew out a little cloth pouch and he fumbled into this and I heard the clink of coins. He drew out two quarters and laid them on the table before Hazen, and Hazen picked them up. I saw that Marshey's fingers moved stiffly; I could almost hear them creak with the cold. Then he reached into the pouch again.

Something dropped out of the mouth of the little cloth bag and fell soundlessly on the table. It looked to me like a bill, a piece of paper currency. I was about to speak, but Hazen, without an instant's hesitation, had dropped his hand on the thing and drawn it unostentatiously toward him. When he lifted his hand the money —if it was money—was gone.

Marshey drew out a little roll of worn bills. Hazen took them out of his hand and counted them swiftly.

"All right," he said. "Eleven-fifty. I'll give you a receipt. But you mind me, Doan Marshey, you get the rest before the month's out. I've been too slack with you."

Marshey, his dull eyes watching Hazen write the receipt, was folding the little pouch and putting it away. Hazen tore off the bit of paper and gave it to him. Doan took it and he said humbly: "Thank'e, sir."

Hazen nodded.

"Mind now," he exclaimed, and Marshey said: "I'll do my best, Mr. Kinch."

Then he turned and shuffled across the room and out into the hall and we heard him descending the stairs.

When he was gone I asked Hazen casually: "What was it that he dropped upon the table?"

"A dollar," said Hazen promptly. "A dollar bill. The miserable fool!"

Hazen's mental processes were always of interest to me.

"You mean to give it back to him?" I asked.

He stared at me and he laughed. "No! If he can't take care of his own money—that's why he is what he is."

"Still it is his money."

"He owes me more than that."

"Going to give him credit for it?"

"Am I a fool?" Hazen asked me. "Do I look like so much of a fool?"

"He may charge you with finding it."

"He loses a dollar; I find one. Can he prove ownership? Pshaw!" Hazen laughed again.

"If there is any spine in him he will lay the thing to you as a theft," I suggested. I was not afraid of angering Hazen. He allowed me open speech; he seemed to find a grim pleasure in my distaste for him and for his way of life.

"If there were any backbone in the man he would not be paying me eighty dollars a year on a five-hundred-dollar loan—discounted."

Hazen grinned at me triumphantly.

"I wonder if he will come back," I said.

"Besides," Hazen continued, "he lied to me. He told me the eleven-fifty was all he had."

"Yes," I agreed. "There is no doubt he lied to you."

Hazen had a letter to write and he bent to it. I sat by the stove and watched him and considered. He had

not yet finished the letter when we heard Marshey returning. His dragging feet on the stair were unmistakable. At the sound of his weary feet some tide of indignation surged up in me.

I was minded to do violence to Hazen Kinch. But—a deeper impulse held my hand from the man.

Marshey came in and his weary eyes wandered about the room. They inspected the floor; they inspected me; they inspected Hazen Kinch's table, and they rose at last humbly to Hazen Kinch.

"Well?" said Hazen.

"I lost a dollar," Marshey told him. "I 'lowed I might have dropped it here."

Hazen frowned.

"You told me eleven-fifty was all you had."

"This here dollar wa'n't mine."

The money-lender laughed.

"Likely! Who would give you a dollar? You lied to me, or you're lying now. I don't believe you lost a dollar."

Marshey reiterated weakly: "I lost a dollar."

"Well," said Hazen, "there's no dollar of yours here."

"It was to git medicine," Marshey said. "It wa'n't mine."

Hazen Kinch exclaimed: "By God, I believe you're accusing me!"

Marshey lifted both hands placatingly.

"No, Mr. Kinch. No, sir." His eyes once more wandered about the room. "Mebbe I dropped it in the snow," he said.

He turned to the door. Even in his slow shuffle there was a hint of trembling eagerness to escape. He went out and down the stairs. Hazen looked at me, his old face wrinkling mirthfully.

"You see?" he said.

I left him a little later and went out into the street. On the way to the hotel I stopped for a cigar at the drug store. Marshey was there, talking with the druggist.

I heard the druggist say: "No, Marshey, I'm sorry. I've been stung too often."

Marshey nodded humbly.

"I didn't 'low you'd figure to trust me," he agreed. "It's all right. I didn't 'low you would."

It was my impulse to give him the dollar he needed, but I did not do it. An overpowering compulsion bade me keep my hands off in this matter. I did not know what I expected, but I felt the imminence of the fates. When I went out into the snow it seemed to me the groan of the gale was like the slow grind of millstones, one upon the other.

I thought long upon the matter of Hazen Kinch before sleep came that night.

Toward morning the snow must have stopped; and the wind increased and carved the drifts till sunrise, then abruptly died. I met Hazen at the postoffice at ten and he said: "I'm starting home."

I asked: "Can you get through?"

He laughed.

"I will get through," he told me.

"You're in haste."

"I want to see that boy of mine," said Hazen Kinch. "A fine boy, man! A fine boy!"

"I'm ready," I said.

When we took the road the mare was limping. But she seemed to work out the stiffness in her knees and after a mile or so of the hard going she was moving smoothly enough. We made good time.

The day, as often happens after a storm, was full of blinding sunlight. The glare of the sun upon the snow was almost unbearable. I kept my eyes all but closed, but there was so much beauty abroad in the land that I could not bear to close them altogether. The snow clung to twigs and to fences and to wires, and a thousand flames glinted from every crystal when the sun struck down upon the drifts. The pine wood upon the eastern slope of Rayborn Hill was a checkerboard of rich colour. Green and blue and black and white, indescribably brilliant. When we crossed the bridge at the foot of the hill we could hear the brook playing beneath the ice that sheathed it. On the white pages of the snow wild things had writ here and there the fine-traced tale

of their morning's adventuring. We saw once where a fox had pinned a big snowshoe rabbit in a drift.

Hazen talked much of that child of his on the homeward way. I said little. From the top of the Rayborn Hill we sighted his house and he laid the whip along the mare and we went down that last long descent at a speed that left me breathless. I shut my eyes and huddled low in the robes for protection against the bitter wind, and I did not open them again till we turned into Hazen's barnyard, ploughing through the unpacked snow.

When we stopped Hazen laughed.

"Ha!" he said. "Now, come in, man, and warm yourself and see the baby! A fine boy!"

He was ahead of me at the door; I went in upon his heels. We came into the kitchen together.

Hazen's kitchen was also living-room and bedroom in the cold of winter. The arrangement saved firewood. There was a bed against the wall opposite the door. As we came in a woman got up stiffly from this bed and I saw that this woman was Hazen's wife. But there was a change in her. She was bleak as cold iron and she was somehow strong.

Hazen rasped at this woman impatiently: "Well, I'm home! Where is the boy?"

She looked at him and her lips moved soundlessly. She closed them, opened them again. This time she was able to speak.

"The boy?" she said to Hazen. "The boy is dead!"

The dim-lit kitchen was very quiet for a little time. I felt myself breathe deeply, almost with relief. The thing for which I had waited—it had come. And I looked at Hazen Kinch.

He had always been a little thin man. He was shrunken now and very white and very still. Only his face twitched. A muscle in one cheek jerked and jerked and jerked at his mouth. It was as though he controlled a desire to smile. That jerking, suppressed smile upon his white and tortured countenance was terrible. I could see the blood drain down from his forehead, down from his cheeks. He became white as death itself.

After a little he tried to speak. I do not know what he meant to say. But what he did was to repeat—as though he had not heard her words—the question which he had flung at her in the beginning. He said huskily: "Where is the boy?"

She looked toward the bed and Hazen looked that way; and then he went across to the bed with uncertain little steps. I followed him. I saw the little twisted body there. The woman had been keeping it warm with her own body. It must have been in her arms when we came in. The tumbled coverings, the crushed pillows spoke mutely of a ferocious intensity of grief.

Hazen looked down at the little body. He made no move to touch it, but I heard him whisper to himself: "Fine boy."

After a while he looked at the woman. She seemed to feel an accusation in his eyes. She said: "I did all I could."

He asked "What was it?"

I had it in me—though I had reason enough to despise the little man—to pity Hazen Kinch.

"He coughed," said the woman. "I knew it was croup. You know I asked you to get the medicine—ipecac. You said no matter—no need—and you had gone."

She looked out of the window.

"I went for help—to Annie Marshey. Her babies had had it. Her husband was gonig to town and she said he would get the medicine for me. She did not tell him it was for me. He would not have done it for you. He did not know. So I gave her a dollar to give him—to bring it out to me.

"He came home in the snow last night. Baby was bad by that time, so I was watching for Doan. I stopped him in the road and I asked for the medicine. When he understood he told me. He had not brought it."

The woman was speaking dully, without emotion.

"It would have been in time, even then," she said. "But after a while, after that, baby died."

I understood in that moment the working of the mills. And when I looked at Hazen Kinch I saw that he, too,

was beginning to understand. There is a just mercilessness in an aroused God. Hazen Kinch was driven to questions.

"Why—didn't Marshey fetch it?" he asked.

She said slowly: "They would not trust him—at the store."

His mouth twitched, he raised his hands.

"The money!" he cried. "The money! What did he do with that?"

"He said," the woman answered, "that he lost it—in your office; lost the money there."

After a little the old money-lender leaned far back like a man wrenched with agony. His body was contorted, his face was terrible. His dry mouth opened wide.

He screamed!

Halfway up the hill to my house I stopped to look back and all round. The vast hills in their snowy garments looked down upon the land, upon the house of Hazen Kinch. Still and silent and inscrutable.

I knew now that a just and brooding God dwelt among these hills.

ON STRIKE

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

From *The Popular Magazine*

FURTHERMORE, howadji," ventured Najib, who had not spoken for fully half an hour, but had been poring over a sheaf of shipment items scribbled in Arabic, "furthermore, I am yearnful to know who was the unhappy person the wicked general threatened. Or, of a perhaps, it was that poor general himself who was bethreatened by his padishah or by the——"

"What on earth are you babbling about, Najib?" absent-mindedly asked Logan Kirby, as he looked up from a month-old New York paper which had arrived by muleteer that day and which the expatriated American had been reading with pathetic interest.

Now, roused from his perusal by Najib's query, Logan saw that the little Syrian had ceased wrestling with the shipment items and was peering over his employer's shoulder, his beady eyes fixed in keen curiosity on the printed page.

"I enseeched you to tell me, howadji," said Najib, "who has been threatening that poor general. Or, perchancely, who has been made to cower himself undertheneath of that fierce general's threatenings. See, it is there, howadji. There, in the black line at the left top end of the news. See?"

Following the guidance of Najib's stubby, unwashed finger, Kirby read the indicated headline:

GENERAL STRIKE THREATENED

"Oh!" he answered, choking back a grin. "I see. There isn't any 'general,' Najib. And he isn't threatened. It means——"

"May the faces of all liars be blackened!" cried Najib in virtuous indignation. "And may the maker of the becurst newspage lie be doubly afflictioned! May his camels die and his wives cast dust upon his bared head! For he has befooled me, by what he has here enprinted. My heart went out with a sweet sorrowfulness for that poor general or for the folk he bethreatened. Whichever it might chance itself to be. And now the news person has made a jest of the truth. But he——"

Kirby's attempt at self-control went to pieces. He guffawed. Najib eyed him sourly; then said in icy reproof:

"It is known to all, howadji, that Sidi-ben-Hassan, the sheikh, was the wisest of men. And did not Sidi-ben-Hassan make known, in his book, that '*Laughter is for women and for hyenas*'? Furthermore——"

"I'm sorry I laughed at you, Najib," returned Kirby, with due penitence, "I don't wonder you got such an idea, from the headline. You see, I have read the story that goes under it. That's how I happen to know what it means. It means that several thousand workmen of several allied trades threatened to go on strike. That will tie up a lot of business, you see; along a lot of lines. It will mean a general tie-up—a——"

From Najib's blank face, the American saw his more or less technical explanation was going wide. Still remorseful at having hurt his factotum's feelings, Kirby laid the paper aside and undertook to simplify the matter.

"It's like this," said he. "We'll say a gang of men aren't satisfied with the pay or the hours they are getting. They asked for more money or for shorter hours; or for both. If the demand is refused, they stop working. They won't go back to their jobs till they get the cash and the hours they want. That is known as 'going on strike.' When a number of concerns are involved in it, it's sometimes called 'a general strike.' This paper says a general strike is threatened. That means——"

"I apperceive it, howadji!" exclaimed Najib. "I am onward to it, now. I might have known the printed

page cannot lie. But, oh, my heart berends itself when I think of the sad fate of those poor folk who do the stroking! Of an assuredly, Allah hath deprived them of wisdom!"

"Not necessarily," argued Kirby, wondering at his henchman's outburst of sympathy for union labourers so many thousand miles away. "They may win, you know; or, at least, get a compromise. And their unions will support them while they are out of work. Of course, they may lose. And then——"

"But when they make refusal to do their work," urged Najib, "will not the soldiers of the pasha cut them to ribbons with the kourbash and drive them back to their toil? Or if the pasha of that pashalik is a brutesome man, will not he cast those poor fellaheen into the prison and beseize their goods? And I answer, howądji, he will. Wherefore my eyes are tearing, for the men who have so unlucklessly——"

"Hold on!" exhorted Kirby; albeit despairing of opening the mind of a man whose forebears for thousands of years had lived in a land where the *corvée*—forced labour—was a hallowed institution; and where the money of employers could always enlist the aid of government soldiery to keep the fellaheen at their tasks. "Hold on! That sort of thing is dead and done with. Even in the East. Chinese Gordon stamped out the last of it, in Egypt, years ago. If a man doesn't want to work, he can't be forced to. All his boss can do is to fire him and try to get some one in his place. When a whole factory of men strike—especially if there are any big contract orders to fill in a rush—the employers sometimes find it cheaper to give them what they want than to call in untrained strikebreakers. On the other hand, sometimes, the boss can bring the men to terms. It all depends."

Yielding to the human joy of imparting instruction to so interested a listener, Kirby launched forth into an elaboration of his theme; trying to expound something of the capital-and-labour situation to his follower; and secretly wondering at the keen zest wherewith his words were listened to.

Seldom was Kirby so successful in making Najib follow so long an oration. And he was pleased with his own new-found powers of explaining Occidental customs to an Oriental mind.

Now, Logan Kirby knew the tangled Syrian character and its myriad queer slants, as well as it can be given to a white man to know it. Kirby's father had been a missionary, at Nablous. He himself had been born there, and had spent his boyhood at the mission. That was why—after he had completed his engineering course at Columbia's school of mines and had served an apprenticeship in Colorado and Arizona—the Cabell Smelting Company of New York had sent him out to the Land of Moab, as manager of its new-acquired little antimony mine.

The mine—a mere prospect shaft—was worked by about thirty fellaheen—native labourers—supervised by a native guard of twelve Turkish soldiers. Small as was the plant, it was a rich property and it was piling up dividends for the Cabells. Antimony, in the East, is used in a score of ways—from its employment in the form of kohl, for the darkening of women's eyes, to the chemical by-products, always in demand by Syrian apothecaries.

This was the only antimony mine between Aden and Germany. Its shipments were in constant demand. Its revenues were a big item on the credit side of the Cabell ledger.

Kirby's personal factotum, as well as superintendent of the mine, was this squat little Syrian, Najib, who had once spent two blissfully useless years with an All Nations Show, at Coney Island; and who there had picked up a language which he proudly believed to be English; and which he spoke exclusively when talking with the manager.

Kirby's rare knowledge of the East had enabled the mine to escape ruin a score of times where a manager less conversant with Oriental ways must have blundered into some fatal error in the handling of his men or in dealing with the local authorities.

Remember, please, that in the East it is the seemingly

insignificant things which bring disaster to the feringhee, or foreigner. For example, many an American or European has met unavenged death because he did not realize that he was heaping vile affront upon his Bedouin host by eating with his left hand. Many a foreign manager of labour has lost instant and complete control over his fellaheen by deigning to wash his own shirt in the near-by river or for brushing the dirt from his own clothes. Thereby he has proved himself a labourer, instead of a master of men. Many a foreigner has been shot or stabbed for speaking to a native whom he thought afflicted with a fit and who was really engaged in prayer. Many more have lost life or authority by laughing at the wrong time or by glancing—with entire absence of interest, perhaps—at some passing woman.

Yes, Kirby had been invaluable to his employers by virtue of his inborn knowledge of Syrian ways. Yet, now, he was not enough of an Oriental to understand why his lecture on the strike system should thrill his listener.

He did not pause to realize that the idea of strikes was one which carries a true appeal to the Eastern imagination. It has all the elements of revenge, of coercion, of trapping, of wily give-and-take, and of simple and logical gambling uncertainty; which characterize the most popular of the Arabian Nights yarns and which have made those tales remain as Syrian classics for more than ten centuries.

"It is of an assuredly a pleasing and noble plan," applauded Najib when Kirby finished the divers ramifications of his discourse. "And I do not misdoubt but what that cruel general betrembled himself inside of his boots when they threatened to strike. If the stroking ones may not be lawfully attackled by the pashalik troops, indeed must the general——"

"I told you there wasn't any general!" interrupted Kirby, jarred that his luminous explanations had still left Najib more or less where it found him, so far as any lucid idea was concerned. "And I've wasted enough time trying to ding the notion of the thing into your thick head. If you've got those shipment items cata-

logued, go back to the shaft and check off the inventory. The first load ought to be on the way to the coast before sunrise to-morrow. Chase!"

As he picked up the duplicate sets of the list and ran over their items once more, Kirby tried to forget his own silly annoyance at his failure to make the dull little Syrian comprehend a custom that had never reached the Land of Moab.

Presently, in his absorption in his work, the American forgot the whole incident. It was the beginning of a rush period at the mine—the busiest month in its history was just setting in. The Alexandretta-bound shipment of the morrow was but the first of twelve big shipments scheduled for the next twenty-nine days.

The restoration of peace and the shutting out of several Central European rivals had thrown an unprecedented sheaf of rush orders on the Cabell mine. It was such a chance as Kirby had longed for; a chance to show his rivals' customers the quality of the Cabell product and the speed and efficiency wherewith orders could and would be filled by him. If he could but fill these new customers' orders in quicker and more satisfactory fashion than the firms were accustomed to receiving, it might well mean that the new buyers would stick to the Cabells, after the other mines should again be in operation.

It was a big chance, as Kirby had explained at some length to Najib, during the past few weeks. At his behest, the little superintendent had used every known method to get extra work and extra speed out of the fellaheen; and, by judicious baksheesh, had even impressed to the toil several members of the haughty, Turkish guard and certain folk from the nearest hill village.

As a result, the first shipment was ready for the muleteers to carry coastward a full week ahead of schedule time. And the contract chanced to be one for which the eager wholesalers at Alexandretta had agreed to pay a bonus for early arrival. The men were even now busy getting a second shipment in shape for transportation by mule train to Tiberias and thence by railway to Damascus.

The work was progressing finely. Kirby thrilled at the thought. And he was just a little ashamed of his own recent impatience at Najib, when he remembered how the superintendent was pushing the relays of consignments along. After all, he mused, it was no reflection on Najib's intelligence that the poor little chap could not grasp the whole involved Occidental strike system in one hasty lecture; and that his simple mind clung to the delusion that there was some fierce general involved in it. In the Arabian Nights was there not always a scheming sultan or a baffled wazir, in every clash with the folk of the land? Was it unnatural that Najib should have substituted for these the mythical general of whom he thought he had seen mention in the news headline?

But, soon after dusk, Kirby had reason to know that his words had not all fallen on barren soil. At close of the working day, Najib had brought the manager the usual diurnal report from the mine. Now, after supper, Kirby, glancing over the report again, found a gap or two in the details. This was no novelty, the Syrian mind not lending itself readily to the compilation of terse yet complete reports. And occasionally Kirby was obliged to summon his henchman to correct or amend the day's tally sheet.

Wherefore, the list in his hand, the American strolled down from his own knoll-top tent toward Najib's quarters. As Najib was superintendent, and thus technically an official, Kirby could make such domiciliary visits without loss of prestige, instead of summoning the Syrian to his presence by handclap or by messenger, as would have been necessary in dealing with any of the other employees.

Najib's hut lay a hundred yards beyond the hollow where the fellaheen and soldiers were encamped. For Najib, too, had a dignity to uphold. He might no more lodge or break bread with his underlings than might Kirby with him. Yet, at times, preparatory to pattering up the knoll for his wonted evening chat with the American at the latter's campfire, Najib would so far unbend as to pause at the fellaheen's camp for a native discussion of many gestures and much loud talking.

So it was to-night. Just outside the radius of the fellaheen's firelight, Kirby paused. For he heard Najib's shrill voice uplifted in speech. And amusedly he halted and prepared to turn back. He had no wish to break in upon a harangue so interesting as the speaker seemed to find this one.

Najib's voice was pitched far above the tones of normal Eastern conversation;—louder and more excited even than that of a professional story-teller. In Syria it is hard to believe that these professionals are merely telling an oft-heard Arabian Nights narrative; and not indulging in delirium or apoplexy.

Yet at a stray word of Najib's, Kirby checked involuntarily his own retreat; and paused again to look back. There stood Najib, in the center of the firelit circle; hands and head in wild motion. Around him, spellbound, squatted the ring of his dark-faced and unwashed hearers. The superintendent, being with his own people, was orating in pure Arabic—or, rather, in the colloquial vernacular which is as close to pure Arabic as one can expect to hear, except among the remoter Bedouins.

"Thus it is!" he was declaiming. "Even as I have sought to show you, oh, addle-witted offspring of mangy camels and one-eyed mules! In that far country, when men are dissatisfied with their wage, they take counsel together and they say, one unto the other: 'Lo, we shall labour no more, unless our hire be greater and our toil hours less!' Then go they to their sheikh or whomever he be who hath hired them, and they say to him: 'Oh, favoured of Allah, behold we must have such and such wage and such and such hours of labour!' Then doth their sheikh cast ashes upon his beard and rend his garments. For doth he not know his fate is upon him and that his breath is in his nostrils? Yet will they not listen to his prayers; but at once they make 'strike.'

"Then doth their sheikh betake himself to the pasha with his grievance; beseeching the pasha, with many rich gifts, that he will throw those strike-making labourers into prison and scourge their kinsmen with the kourbash. But the pasha maketh answer, with tears: 'Lo, I am helpless! What saith the law? It saith that a man

may make strike at will; and that his employer must pay what is demanded!' Now, this pasha is named 'General.' And his heart is as gall within him that he may not accept the rich gifts offered by the sheikh; and punish the labourers. Yet the law restraineth him. Then the sheikh, perchance, still refuseth the demands of his toilers. And they say to him then: 'If you will not employ us and on the terms we ordain, then shall ye hire none others, for we shall overthrow those whom you set in our places. And perchance we shall destroy your warehouses or barns or shops!' This say they, when they know he hath greatest need of them. Then boweth their master his head upon his breast and saith: 'Be it even as ye will, my hirelings! For I must obey!' And he giveth them, of his substance, whatsoever they may require. And all are glad. And under the new law, even in this land of ours, none may imprison or beat those who will not work. And all may demand and receive what wage they will. And——"

And Kirby waited to hear no more. With a groan of disgust at the orator's imbecility, he went back, up the hill, to his own tent.

There, he drew forth his rickety sea chair and placed it in front of a patch of campfire that twinkled in the open space in front of the tent door. For, up there in the hills, the nights had an edge of chill to them; be the days ever so hot.

Stretching himself out lazily in his long chair, Kirby exhumed from a shirt pocket his disreputable brier pipe, and filled and lighted it. The big white Syrian stars glinted down on him from a black velvet sky. Along the nearer peaks and hollows of the Moab Mountains, the knots of prowling jackals kept up a running chorus of yapping—a discordant chant punctuated now and then by the far-away howl of a hunting wolf; or, by the choking "laugh" of a hyena in the valley below, who thus gave forth the news of some especially delicious bit of carrion discovered among the rocks.

And Kirby was reminded of Najib's quoted dictum that "laughter is for women and for hyenas." The memory brought back to him his squat henchman's weird

jumbling of the strike system. And he smiled in reminiscent mirth.

The Syrian had been his comrade in many a vicissitude. And he knew that Najib's fondness for him was as sincere as can be that of any Oriental for a foreigner, an affection based not wholly on self-interest. Kirby enjoyed his evening powwows with the superintendent beside the campfire; and the little man's amazing faculty for mangling the English tongue.

He rather missed Najib's presence to-night. But he was not to miss it for long. Just as he was about to knock out his pipe and go to bed, the native came pattering up the slope on excitedly rapid feet; and squatted as usual on the ground beside the American's lounging chair. In Najib's manner there was a scarce-repressed jubilant thrill. His beady eyes shone wildly. Hardly had he seated himself when he broke the custom of momentary grave silence by blurting forth:

"Furthermore, howadji, I am the bearer of gladly tidings which will make you to beshout yourself aloud for joyfulness and leap about and besclaim: 'Pretty fair!' and other words of a grand rapture. For the bird will sing gleesome dirges in your heart!"

"Well?" queried Kirby in no especial excitement. "I'm listening. But if the news is really so wonderful you surely took your time in bringing it. I've been here all evening, while you've stayed below there, trying to increase those fellaheens' stock of ignorance. What's the idea?"

"Oh, I prythee you, do not let my awayness beget your goat, howadji!" pleaded Najib, ever sensitive to any hint of reproof from his master. "It was that which made the grand tidings. If I had not of been where I have been this evening—and doing what I have done—there would not be any tidings at all. I made the tidings myself. Both of them. And I made them for *you*. Is it that I may now tell them to you, howadji?"

"Go ahead," adjured Kirby, humouring the wistful eagerness of the man. "What's the news you have for me?"

"It is more than just a 'news,' howadji," corrected

Najib with jealous regard for shades of meaning. "It is a tidings. And it is this: You and my poor self and all the fellaheen and even those hell-selected pashalik soldiers—we are all to be rich. Most especially *you*, howadji. Wealthiness bewaits us all. No longer shall any of us be downward and outward from povertude. No more shall any of us toil early and belatedly. We shall all live in easiness of hours and with much payment. *Inshallah! Alhandulillah!*" he concluded, his rising excitement for once bursting the carefully nourished bounds of English and overflowing into Arabic expletive.

Noting his own lapse into his native language, he looked sheepishly at Kirby, as though hoping the American had not heard the break. Then, with mounting eagerness, Najib struck the climax of his narrative.

"To speak with a briefness, howadji," he proclaimed grandiloquently. "We have all stroked ourselfs!"

"You've all done—what?" asked the puzzled Kirby.

"Not we alone, howadji," amended Najib, "but you also! We would not berich ourselves and leave you outward in the plan. It is you also who are to stroke yourself. And——"

"For the love of Heaven!" exclaimed Kirby in sudden loss of patience. "What are you driving at? What do you mean about 'stroking yourselves'? Say it in Arabic. Then perhaps I can find what you mean."

"It is not to be said in the Arabic, howadji," returned Najib, wincing at this slur on his English. "For there is not such a thing in the Arabic as to make strike. We make strike. Thus I say it we "stroke ourselves." If it is the wrong way for saying it——"

"Strike?" repeated Kirby, perplexed. "What do you mean? Are you still thinking about what I told you to-day? If you are going——"

"I have bethought of it, howadji, ever since," was the reply. "And it is because of my much bethoughting that I found my splenderous plan. That is my tidings. I bethought it all out with tremense clearness and wiseness. Then I told those others, down yonder. At first they were of a stupidity. For it was so new. But at

last I made them understand. And they rejoiced of it. So it is all settled most sweetly. You may not fear that they will not stand by it. As soon as that was made sure I came to you to tell——"

"Najib!" groaned Kirby, his head awhirl. "*Will* you stop chewing chunks of indigestible language, and tell me what you are jabbering about? What was it you thought over? And what is 'all settled'? What will——"

"The strike, of an assuredly," explained Najib, as if in pity of his chief's denseness. "To-night we make strike. All of us. That is one tiding. And you, too, make strike with us. That is the other tiding. Making two tidings. We make strike. To-morrow we all sleep late. No work is to be made. And so it shall be, on each dear and nice and happy day, until Cabell Effendi —be his sons an hundred and his wives true!—shall pay us the money we ask and make short our hours of toil. Then——"

Kirby sought to speak. But his breath was gone. He only gobbled. Taking the wordless sound for a token of high approval, Najib hastened on, more glibly, with his program.

"On the to-morrow's morning, howadji," he said, "we enseech that you will write a sorrowsome letter to Cabell Effendi, in the Broad Street of New York; and say to him that all of us have made strike and that we shall work no more until we have from his hands a writing that our payment shall be two mejidie for every mejidie we have been capturing from his company. Also and likewise that we shall work but half time. And that you, howadji, are to receive even as we; save only that *your* wage is to be enswollen to three times over than what it is now. And say to him, howadji, that unless he does our wish in this striking we shall slay all others whom he may behire in our place and that we shall dynamitely destroy that nice mine. Remind him, howadji—if perchancely he does not know of such things—that the law is with us. Say, moreoverly, that there be many importanceful shipments and contracts just now. And say he will lose all if he be so bony of head as to refuse

us. Furthermore, howadji, tell him, I prythee you, that we——"

A veritable yell from Kirby broke in on the smug instructions. The American had recovered enough of his breath to expend a lungful of it in one profane bellow. In a flash he visualized the whole scene at the fellaheens' quarters—Najib's crazy explanation of the strike system and of the supposed immunity from punishment that would follow sabotage and other violence; the fellaheens' duller brains gradually seizing on the idea until it had become as much a part of their mucilaginous mentality as the Koran itself; and Najib's friendly desire that Kirby might share in the golden benefits of the new scheme.

Yes, the American grasped the whole thing at once; his knowledge of the East foretelling to him its boundless possibilities for mischief and for the ruin of the mine's new prosperity. He fairly strangled with the gust of wrath and impotent amaze which gripped him.

Najib smiled up at him as might a dog that had just performed some pretty new trick, or a child who has brought to its father a gift. But the aspect of Kirby's distorted face there in the dying firelight shocked the Syrian into a grunt of terror. Scrambling to his feet, he sputtered quaveringly.

"Tame yourself, howadji, I enseech you! Why are you not rejoiceful? Will it not mean much money for you; and——"

"You mangy brown rat!" shouted Kirby in fury. "What in blazes have you done? You know, as well as I do, that such an idea will never get out of those fellaheens' skulls, once it's really planted there. They'll believe every word of that wall-eyed rot you've been telling them! And they'll go on a *genuine* strike on the strength of it. They'll——"

"Of an assuredly, howadji, they will," assented the bewildered Najib. "I made me very assured of that. Four times I told it all over to them, until even poor Imbarak—whose witfulness hath been beblown out from his brain by the breath of the Most High—until even Imbarak understood. But why it should enrouse you

to a lionsome raging I cannot think. I bethought you would be pleasured——"

"Listen to me!" ordered Kirby, fighting hard for self-control and forcing himself to speak with unnatural slowness. "You've done more damage than if you had dynamited the whole mine and then turned a river into the shaft. This kind of news spreads. In a week there won't be a worker east of the Jordan who won't be a strike fan. And these people here will work the idea a step farther. I know them. They'll decide that if one strike is good, two strikes are better. And they will strike every week—loafing between times."

This prospect brought a grin of pure bliss to Najib's swarthy face. He looked in new admiration upon his farsighted chief. Kirby went on:

"Not that that will concern us. For this present strike will settle the Cabell mine. It means ruin to our business here, and the loss of all your jobs, as well as my own. Why, you idiot, can't you see what you've done? If you don't take that asinine grin off your ugly face, I'll knock it off!" he burst out, his hard-held patience momentarily fraying.

Then, taking new hold on his self-control, Kirby began again to talk. As if addressing a defective child, which, as a matter of fact, he was doing, he expounded the hideous situation.

He explained the disloyalty to the Cabells of such a move as Najib had planned. He pointed out the pride he and Najib had taken in the new business they had secured for the home office; and the fact that this new business had brought an increase of pay to them both as well as to the fellaheen. He showed how great a triumph for the mine was this vast increase of business; and the stark necessity of impressing the new customers by the promptitude and uniform excellence of all shipments. He pointed out the utter collapse to this and to all the rest of the mine's connections which a strike would entail. Najib listened unmoved.

Hopeless of hammering American ethics into the brain of an Oriental, Kirby set off at a new angle. He explained the loss of prestige and position which he him-

self would suffer. He would be discharged—probably by cable—for allowing the mine's bourgeoning prosperity to go to pieces in such fashion. Another and less lenient and understanding manager would be sent out to take his place. A manager whose first official act would probably be the discharging of Najib as the cause of the whole trouble.

Najib listened to this with a new interest, but with no great conviction.

Even Kirby's declaration that the ridiculous strike would be a failure, and that the government would assuredly punish any damage done to the Cabell property, did not serve to impress him. Najib was a Syrian. An idea, once firm-rooted in his mind, was loathe to let itself be torn thence by mere words. Kirby waxed desperate.

"You have wrecked this whole thing!" he stormed. "You got an idiotically wrong slant on what I told you about strikes to-day; and you have ruined us all. Even if you should go down there to the quarters this minute and tell the men that you were mistaken and that the strike is off—you know they wouldn't believe you. And you know they would go straight ahead with the thing. That's the Oriental of it. They'd refuse to go on working. And our shipments wouldn't be delivered. None of the ore for the next shipments would be mined. The men would just hang about, peacefully waiting for the double pay and the half time that you've promised them."

"Of an assuredly, that is true, howadji," conceded Najib. "They would——"

"They *will!*" corrected Kirby with grim hopelessness.

"But soon Cabell Effendi will reply to your letter," went on Najib. "And then the double paying——"

"To my letter!" mocked the raging Kirby.

Then he paused, a sudden inspiration smiting him.

"Najib," he continued after a minute of concentrated thought, "you have sense enough to know one thing: You have sense enough to know you people can't get that extra pay till I write to Mr. Cabell and demand it for you. There's not another one of you who can write

English. There's no one here but yourself who can speak or understand it or make shift to spell out a few English words in print. And Mr. Cabell doesn't know a word of Arabic—let alone the Arabic script. And your own two years at Coney Island must have shown you that no New Yorkers would know how to read an Arabic letter to him. Now, I swear to you, by every Christian and Moslem oath, that *I* shan't write such a letter! So how are you going to get word to him that you people are on strike and that you won't do another lick of work till you get double pay and half time? How are you going to do that?"

Najib's solid face went blank. Here at last was an argument that struck home. He had known Kirby for years, long enough to know that the American was most emphatically a man of his word. If Kirby swore he would not act as the men's intermediary with the company, then decisively Kirby would keep his oath. And Najib realized the futility of getting any one else to write such a letter in any language which the Cabell Smelting Company's home office would decipher.

He peered up at Kirby with disconsolate astonishment. Quick to take advantage of the change, the manager hurried on:

"Now, the men are on strike. That's understood. Well, what are you and they going to do about it? When the draft for the monthly pay roll comes to the bank, at Jerusalem, as usual, I shall refuse to indorse it. I give you my oath on that, too. I am not going to distribute the company's cash among a bunch of strikers. Without my signature, the bank won't cash the draft. You know that. Well, how are you going to live, all of you, on nothing a month? When the present stock of provisions gives out I'm not going to order them renewed. And the provision people in Jerusalem won't honour any one's order for them but mine. This is the only concern in Syria to-day that pays within forty per cent. of the wages you chaps are getting. With no pay and no food you're due to find your strike rather costly. For when the mine shuts down I'm going back to America. There'll be nothing to keep me here. I'll be ruined,

in any case. You people will find yourself without money or provisions. And if you go elsewhere for work it will be at pay that is only a little more than half what you are getting now. Your lookout isn't cheery, my striking friend!"

He made as though to go into his tent. After a brief pause of horror, Najib pattered hurriedly and beseechingly in his wake.

"Howadji!" pleaded the Syrian shakily. "*Howadji!* You would not, in the untamefulness of your mad, desertion us like that? Not *me*, at anyhow? Not me, who have loved you as Daoud the Emir loved Jonathan of old! You would not forsook me, to starve myself! *Aie! Ohé!*"

"Shut up that ungodly racket!" snapped Kirby, entering his tent and lighting his lamp, as the first piercing notes of the traditional mourner chant exploded through the unhappy Najib's wide-flung jaws. "Shut up! You'll start every hyena and jackal in the mountains to howling! It's bad enough as it is without adding a native concert to the rest of the mess."

"But, howadji!" pleaded Najib.

"*Tamán!*" growled Kirby, summarily speaking the age-hallowed Arabic word for the ending of all interviews.

"But I shall be beruinated, howadji!" tearfully insisted Najib.

Covertly the American watched his henchman while pretending to make ready for bed. If he had fully and permanently scared Najib into a conviction that the strike would spell ruin for the Syrian himself, then the little man's brain might possibly be jarred into one of its rare intervals of uncanny craftiness; and Najib might hit upon some way of persuading the fellaheen that the strike was off.

This was Kirby's sole hope. And he knew it. Unless the fellaheen could be so convinced, it meant the strike would continue until it should break the mine as well as the mine's manager. Kirby knew of no way to persuade the men. The same arguments which had crushed Najib would mean nothing to them. All their brains

could master at one time, without the aid of some uprooting shock, was that henceforth they were to get double pay and half labour.

A calm fatalism of hopelessness, bred perhaps of his long residence in the homeland of fatalism, began to creep over Kirby. In one hour his golden ambitions for the mine and for himself had been smashed. At best he saw no hope of getting the obsessed mine crew to work soon enough to save his present contracts. He would be lucky if, on non-receipt of their demanded increase, they did not follow Najib's muddled preachments to the point of sabotage.

The more he thought of it, the less possible did it seem to Kirby that Najib could undo the damage he had so blithely done. Ordering the blubbering little fellow out of the tent and refusing to speak or listen further, Kirby went to bed.

Oddly enough, he slept. There was nothing to worry about. When a man's job or fortune are imperilled sleep vanishes. But after the catastrophe what sense is there in lying awake? Depression and nervous fatigue threw Kirby into a troubled slumber. Only once in the night was he roused.

Perhaps two hours before dawn he started up at sound of a humble scratching at the open door flap of his tent. On the threshold cowered Najib.

"Furthermore, howadji," came the Syrian's woe-begone voice through the gloom, "could I borrow me a book if I shall use it with much carefulness?"

Too drowsy to heed the absurdity of such a plea at such an hour, Kirby grumbled a surly assent, and dozed again as he heard Najib rumbling, in the dark, among the shelves of the packing-box bookcase in a far corner of the tent. Here were stored nearly a hundred old volumes which had once been a part of the missionary library belonging to Kirby's father at Nablous. A few years earlier, at the moving of the mission, the dead missionary's scanty library had been shipped across country to his son.

Kirby awoke at greyest daylight. Through force of habit he woke at this hour; in spite of the workless day

which he knew confronted him. It was his custom to get up and take his bath in the rain cistern at this time, and to finish dressing just as the men piled out for the morning's work.

Yet now the first sounds that smote his ears as he opened his eyes were the rhythmic creak of the mine windlass and the equally rhythmic, if less tuneful, chant of the men who were working it:

"All-ah sa-eed!—Ne-bi sa-eed! Ohé! Sa-eed! Sa-eed! Sa-EED!"

In the distance, dying away, he heard the plodding hoofs of a string of pack mules. From the direction of the mine came the hoodlum racket which betokens, in Syria, the efforts of a number of honest labourers to perform their daily tasks in an efficient and orderly way.

Kirby, in sleepy amaze, looked at his watch in the dim dawn light. He saw it was still a full half hour before the men were due to begin work. And by the sounds he judged that the day's labour was evidently well under way. Yes, and to-day there was to have been no work done!

Kirby jumped out of bed and strode dazedly to his tent door. At the mine below him his fellaheen were as busy as so many dirty and gaudy bees. Even the lordly lazy Turkish soldiers were lending a hand at windlass and crane. Over the nick of the pass, leading toward Jerusalem, the last animal of a mule train was vanishing. Najib, who had as usual escorted the departing shipment of ore to the opening in the pass, was trotting back toward camp.

At sight of Kirby in the tent door the little superintendent veered from his course toward the mine and increased his pace to a run as he bore down upon the American. Najib's swart face was aglow. But his eyes were those of a man who has neglected to sleep. His cheeks still bore flecks of the dust he had thrown on his head when Kirby had explained the wreck of his scheme and of his future. There, in all likelihood, the dust smears would remain until the next rain should wash them off. But, beyond these tokens of recent

mental strife, Najib's visage shone like a full moon that is streaked by dun dust clouds.

"Furthermore, howadji!" he hailed his chief as soon as he was within earshot, "the shipment for Alexandretta is on its wayward—over than an hour earlier than it was due to bestart itself. And those poor hell-selected fellaheen are betoiling themselfs grand. Have I done well, oh, howadji?"

"Najib!" stammered Kirby, still dazed.

"And here is that most sweet book of great worthiness and wit, which I borrowed me of you in the night, howadji," pursued Najib, taking from the soiled folds of his abieh a large old volume bound in [illegible] leather, after the manner of religious or scientific books of a half-century ago. On the brown back a scratched gold lettering proclaimed the gruesome title:

"Martyrs of Ancient and Modern Error."

Well did Kirby know the tome. Hundreds of times, as a child, had he sat on the stone floor of his father's cell-like mission study at Nablous, and had pored in shuddering fascination over its highly coloured illustrations. The book was a compilation—chiefly in the form of multichrome pictures with accompanying borders of text—of all the grisly scenes of martyrdom which the publishers had been able to scrape together from such classics as "Fox's Book of Martyrs" and the like. Twice this past year he had surprised Najib scanning the gruesome pages in frank delight.

"I betook the book to their campfire, howadji, and I smote upon my breast and I bewept me and I wailed aloud and I would not make comfort. Till at last they all awoken and they came out of their huts and they reviled at me for disturbing them as they slept themselfs so happily. Then I spake much to them. And all the time I teared with my eyes and moaned aloudly."

"But," put in Kirby, "I don't see what this——"

"In a presently you shall, howadji. Yesterday I begot your goat. To-day I shall make you to frisk with peacefulness of heart. Those fellaheen cannot read. They are not of an education, as I am. And they know my wiseness in reading. For over than a trillion times

I have told them. And they believe. Pictures also they believe. Just as men of an education believe the printed word; knowing full well it could not be printed if it were not Allah's own truth. Well, these folk believe a picture if it be in a book. So I showed them pictures. And I read the law which was beneath the pictures. They heard me read. And they saw the pictures with their own eyesight. So what could they do but believe? And they did. Behold, howadji!"

Opening the volume with respectful care, Najib thumbed the yellowing pages. Presently he paused at a picture which represented in glaring detail a stricken battlefield strewn with dead and dying Orientals of vivid costume. In the middle distance a regiment of prisoners was being slaughtered in singularly bloodthirsty fashion. The caption, above the cut, read:

"Destruction of Sennacherib's Assyrian Hosts, by the People of Israel."

"While yet they gazed joyingly on this noble picture," remarked Najib, "I read to them the words of the law about it. I read aloudly, thus: 'This shall be the way of punishing all folk who make strike hereafter this date.' Then," continued Najib, "I showed to them another pretty and splendid picture. See!"

"Martyrdom of John Rogers, His Wife and Their Nine Children."

"And," proclaimed Najib, "of this sweet portrait I read thus the law: 'So shall the wifes and the offsprungs of all strike-makers be put to death; and those wicked strike-makers themselfs along with them.' By the time I had shown them six or fifteen of such pictures and read them the law for each of them, those miserable fellaheen and guards were beweeping themselfs harder and louder and sadder than I had seemed to. Why, howadji, it was with a difficultness that I kept them from running away and enhiding themselfs in the mountains, lest the soldiers of the pasha come upon them at once and punish them for trying to make strike! But I said I would intercede with you to make you merciful of heart toward them, to spare them and not to tell the law what they had so sinsomely planned to

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do. I said I would do this, for mine own sake as well as for theirs, and that I knew I could wake you to pity. But I said it would perchancely soften your heart toward them, if all should work harder to atone themselfs for the sin they had beplotted. Wherefore, howadji, they would consent to sleep no more; but they ran henceforthly and at once to the mine. They have been onto the job ever since. And, howadji, they are jobbing harder than ever I have seen men bejob themselfs. Am I forgiven, howadji?" he finished timidly.

"Forgiven!" yelled Kirby, when he could speak. "Why, you eternal little liar, you're a genius! My hat is off to you! This ought to be worth a fifty-mejidie bonus. And——"

"Instead of the bonus, howadji," ventured Najib, scared at his own audacity, yet seeking to take full advantage of this moment of expansiveness, "could I have this pleasing book as a baksheesh gift?"

"Take it!" vouchsafed Kirby. "The thing gives me bad dreams. Take it!"

"May the houris make soft your bed in the Paradise of the Prophet!" jabbered Najib, in a frenzy of gratitude, as he hugged the treasured gift to his breast. "And —and, howadji, there be more pictures I did not show. They will be of a nice convenience, if ever again it be needsome to make a new law for the mine."

"But——"

"Oh, happy and pretty decent hour!" chortled the little man, petting his beloved volume as if it were a loved child and executing a shuffling and improvised step-dance of unalloyed rapture. "This book has been donationed to me because I was brave enough to request for it while yet your heart was warm at me, howadji. It is even as your sainted feringhee proverb says: 'Never put off till to-morrow the—the—man who may be done, to-day!'"

THE ELEPHANT REMEMBERS

By EDISON MARSHALL

From *Everybody's Magazine*

AN elephant is old on the day he is born, say the natives of Burma, and no white man is ever quite sure just what they mean. Perhaps they refer to his pink, old-gentleman's skin and his droll, fumbling, old-man ways and his squeaking treble voice. And maybe they mean he is born with a wisdom such as usually belongs only to age. And it is true that if any animal in the world has had a chance to acquire knowledge it is the elephant, for his breed are the oldest residents of this old world.

They are so old that they don't seem to belong to the twentieth century at all. Their long trunks, their huge shapes, all seem part of the remote past. They are just the remnants of a breed that once was great.

Long and long ago, when the world was very young indeed, when the mountains were new, and before the descent of the great glaciers taught the meaning of cold, they were the rulers of the earth, but they have been conquered in the struggle for existence. Their great cousins, the mastodon and the mammoth, are completely gone, and their own tribe can now be numbered by thousands.

But because they have been so long upon the earth, because they have wealth of experience beyond all other creatures, they seem like venerable sages in a world of children. They are like the last veterans of an old war, who can remember scenes and faces that all others have forgotten.

Far in a remote section of British India, in a strange, wild province called Burma, Muztagh was born. And although he was born in captivity, the property of a

mahout, in his first hour he heard the far-off call of the wild elephants in the jungle.

The Burmans, just like the other people of India, always watch the first hour of a baby's life very closely. They know that always some incident will occur that will point, as a weather-vane points in the wind, to the baby's future. Often they have to call a man versed in magic to interpret, but sometimes the prophecy is quite self-evident. No one knows whether or not it works the same with baby elephants, but certainly this wild, far-carrying call, not to be imitated by any living voice, did seem a token and an omen in the life of Muztagh. And it is a curious fact that the little baby lifted his ears at the sound and rocked back and forth on his pillar legs.

Of all the places in the great world, only a few remain wherein a captive elephant hears the call of his wild brethren at birth. Muztagh's birthplace lies around the corner of the Bay of Bengal, not far from the watershed of the Irawadi, almost north of Java. It is strange and wild and dark beyond the power of words to tell. There are great dark forests, unknown, slow-moving rivers, and jungles silent and dark and impenetrable.

Little Muztagh weighed a flat two hundred pounds at birth. But this was not the queerest thing about him. Elephant babies, although usually weighing not more than one hundred and eighty, often touch two hundred. The queerest thing was a peculiarity that probably was completely overlooked by his mother. If she saw it out of her dull eyes, she took no notice of it. It was not definitely discovered until the mahout came out of his hut with a lighted fagot for a first inspection.

He had been wakened by the sound of the mother's pain. "*Hai!*" he had exclaimed to his wife. "Who has ever heard a cow bawl so loud in labour? The little one that to-morrow you will see beneath her belly must weigh more than you!"

This was rather a compliment to his plump wife. She was not offended at all. Burman women love to be well-rounded. But the mahout was not weighing

the effect of his words. He was busy lighting his firebrand, and his features seemed sharp and intent when the beams came out. Rather he was already weighing the profits of little Muztagh. He was an elephant-catcher by trade, in the employ of the great white Dugan Sahib, and the cow that was at this moment bringing a son into the world was his own property. If the baby should be of the Kumiria——

The mahout knew elephants from head to tail, and he was very well acquainted with the three grades that compose that breed. The least valuable of all are the Mierga—a light, small-headed, thin-skinned, weak-trunked and unintelligent variety that are often found in the best elephant herds. They are often born of the most noble parents, and they are as big a problem to elephant men as razor-backs to hog-breeders. Then there is a second variety, the Dwasala, that compose the great bulk of the herd—a good, substantial, strong, intelligent grade of elephant. But the Kumiria is the best of all; and when one is born in a captive herd it is a time for rejoicing. He is the perfect elephant—heavy, symmetrical, trustworthy and fearless—fitted for the pageantry of kings.

He hurried out to the lines, for now he knew that the baby was born. The mother's cries had ceased. The jungle, dark and savage beyond ever the power of man to tame, lay just beyond. He could feel its heavy air, its smells; its silence was an essence. And as he stood, lifting the fagot high, he heard the wild elephants trumpeting from the hills.

He turned his head in amazement. A Burman, and particularly one who chases the wild elephants in their jungles, is intensely superstitious, and for an instant it seemed to him that the wild trumpeting must have some secret meaning, it was so loud and triumphant and prolonged. It was greatly like the far-famed elephant salute—ever one of the mysteries of those most mysterious of animals—that the great creatures utter at certain occasions and times.

"Are you saluting this little one?" he cried. "He is not a wild tusker like you. He is not a wild pig of the

jungle. He is born in bonds, such as you will wear too, after the next drive!"

They trumpeted again, as if in scorn of his words. Their great strength was given them to rule the jungle, not to haul logs and pull chains! The man turned back to the lines and lifted higher his light.

Yes—the little elephant in the light-glow was of the Kumiria. Never had there been a more perfect calf. The light of greed sprang again in his eyes. And as he held the fagot nearer so that the beams played in the elephant's eyes and on his coat, the mahout sat down and was still, lest the gods observe his good luck, and, being jealous, turn it into evil.

The coat was not pinky dark, as is usual in baby elephants. It was distinctly light-coloured—only a few degrees darker than white.

The man understood at once. In the elephants, as well as in all other breeds, an albino is sometimes born. A perfectly white elephant, up to a few years ago, had never been seen, but on rare occasions elephants are born with light-coloured or clouded hides. Such creatures are bought at fabulous prices by the Malay and Siamese princes, to whom a white elephant is the greatest treasure that a king can possess.

Muztagh was a long way from being an albino, yet a tendency in that direction had bleached his hide. And the man knew that on the morrow Dugan Sahib would pay him a lifetime's earnings for the little wabbly calf, whose welcome had been the wild cries of the tuskers in the jungle.

II

Little Muztagh (which means White Mountain in an ancient tongue) did not enjoy his babyhood at all. He was born with the memory of jungle kingdoms, and the life in the elephant lines almost killed him with dulness.

There was never anything to do but nurse of the strong elephant milk and roam about in the *keddah* or along the lines. He had been bought the second day of his life by Dugan Sahib, and the great white heaven-

born saw to it that he underwent none of the risks that are the happy fate of most baby elephants. His mother was not taken on the elephant drives into the jungles, so he never got a taste of this exciting sport. Mostly she was kept chained in the lines, and every day Langur Dass, the low-caste hillman in Dugan's employ, grubbed grass for her in the valleys. All night long, except the regular four hours of sleep, he would hear her grumble and rumble and mutter discontent that her little son shared with her.

Muztagh's second year was little better. Of course he had reached the age where he could eat such dainties as grass and young sugar-cane, but these things could not make up for the fun he was missing in the hills. He would stand long hours watching their purple tops against the skies, and his little dark eyes would glow. He would see the storms break and flash above them, behold the rains lash down through the jungles, and he was always filled with strange longings and desires that he was too young to understand or to follow. He would see the white haze steam up from the labyrinth of wet vines, and he would tingle and scratch for the feel of its wetness on his skin. And often, when the mysterious Burman night came down, it seemed to him that he would go mad. He would hear the wild tuskers trumpeting in the jungles a very long way off, and all the myriad noises of the mysterious night, and at such times even his mother looked at him with wonder.

"Oh, little restless one," Langur Dass would say, "thou and that old cow thy mother and I have one heart between us. We know the burning—we understand, we three!"

It was true that Langur Dass understood more of the ways of the forest people than any other hillman in the encampment. But his caste was low, and he was drunken and careless and lazy beyond words, and the hunters had mostly only scorn for him. They called him Langur after a grey-bearded breed of monkeys along the slopes of the Himalayas, rather suspecting he was cursed with evil spirits, for why should any sane man have such mad ideas as to the rights of elephants? He never wanted

to join in the drives—which was a strange thing indeed for a man raised in the hills. Perhaps he was afraid—but yet they could remember a certain day in the bamboo thickets, when a great, wild buffalo had charged their camp and Langur Dass acted as if fear were something he had never heard of and knew nothing whatever about.

One day they asked him about it. "Tell us, Langur Dass," they asked, mocking the ragged, dejected-looking creature, "if thy name speaks truth, thou art brother to many monkey-folk, and who knows the jungle better than thou or they? None but the monkey-folk and thou canst talk with my lord the elephant. *Hai!* We have seen thee do it, Langur Dass. How is it that when we go hunting, thou art afraid to come?"

Langur looked at them out of his dull eyes, and evaded their question just as long as he could. "Have you forgotten the tales you heard on your mothers' breasts?" he asked at last. "Elephants are of the jungle. You are of the cooking-pots and thatch! How should such folk as ye are understand?"

This was flat heresy from their viewpoint. There is an old legend among the elephant-catchers to the effect that at one time men were subject to the elephants.

Yet mostly the elephants that these men knew were patient and contented in their bonds. Mostly they loved their mahouts, gave their strong backs willingly to toil, and were always glad and ready to join in the chase after others of their breed. Only on certain nights of the year, when the tuskers called from the jungles, and the spirit of the wild was abroad, would their love of liberty return to them. But to all this little Muztagh was distinctly an exception. Even though he had been born in captivity, his desire for liberty was with him just as constantly as his trunk or his ears.

He had no love for the mahout that rode his mother. He took little interest in the little brown boys and girls that played before his stall. He would stand and look over their heads into the wild, dark heart of the jungle that no man can ever quite understand. And being only a beast, he did not know anything about the caste and

prejudices of the men he saw, but he did know that one of them, the low-caste Langur Dass, ragged and dirty and despised, wakened a responsive chord in his lonely heart.

They would have long talks together, that is, Langur would talk and Muztagh would mumble. "Little calf, little fat one," the man would say, "can great rocks stop a tree from growing? Shall iron shackles stop a prince from being king? Muztagh—jewel among jewels! Thy heart speaks through those sleepless eyes of thine! Have patience—what thou knowest, who shall take away from thee?"

But most of the mahouts and catchers noticed the rapidity with which the little Muztagh acquired weight and strength. He outweighed, at the age of three, any calf of his season in the encampment by a full two hundred pounds. And of course three in an elephant is no older than three in a human child. He was still just a baby, even if he did have the wild tuskers' love of liberty.

"Shalt thou never lie the day long in the cool mud, little one? Never see a storm break on the hills? Nor feel a warm rain dripping through the branches? Or are these matters part of thee that none may steal?" Langur Dass would ask him, contented to wait a very long time for his answer. "I think already that thou knowest how the tiger steals away at thy shrill note; how thickets feel that crash beneath thy hurrying weight! A little I think thou knowest how the madness comes with the changing seasons. How knowest thou these things? Not as I know them, who have seen—nay, but as a king knows conquering; it's in thy blood! Is a bundle of sugar-cane tribute enough for thee, Kumiria? Shall purple trappings please thee? Shall some fat rajah of the plains make a beast of burden of thee? Answer, lord of mighty memories!"

And Muztagh answered in his own way, without sound or emphasis, but giving his love to Langur Dass, a love as large as the big elephant heart from which it had sprung. No other man could even win his friendship. The smell of the jungle was on Langur Dass.

The mahouts and hunters smelt more or less of civilization and were convinced for their part that the disposition of the little light-coloured elephant was beyond redemption.

"He is a born rogue," was their verdict, and they meant by that, a particular kind of elephant, sometimes a young male, more often an old and savage tusker, alone in the jungle—apart from the herd. Solitariness doesn't improve their dispositions, and they were generally expelled from a herd for ill-temper to begin with. "Woe to the fool prince who buys this one!" said the greybeard catchers. "There is murder in his eyes."

But Langur Dass would only look wise when he heard these remarks. He knew elephants. The gleam in the dark eyes of Muztagh was not viciousness, but simply inheritance, a love of the wide wild spaces that left no room for ordinary friendships.

But calf-love and mother-love bind other animals as well as men, and possibly he might have perfectly fulfilled the plans Dugan had made for him but for a mistake the sahib made in the little calf's ninth year.

He sold Muztagh's mother to an elephant-breeder from a distant province. Little Muztagh saw her march away between two tuskers—down the long elephant trail into the valley and the shadow.

"Watch the little one closely to-night," Dugan Sahib said to his mahout. So when they had led him back and forth along the lines, they saw that the ends of his ropes were pegged down tightly. They were horsehair ropes, far beyond the strength of any normal nine-year-old elephant to break. Then they went to the huts and to their women and left him to shift restlessly from foot to foot, and think.

Probably he would have been satisfied with thinking, for Muztagh did not know his strength, and thought he was securely tied. The incident that upset the mahout's plans was simply that the wild elephants trumpeted again from the hills.

Muztagh heard the sound, long drawn and strange from the silence of the jungle. He grew motionless. The great ears pricked forward, the whipping tail stood

still. It was a call never to be denied. The blood was leaping in his great veins.

He suddenly rocked forward with all his strength. The rope spun tight, hummed, and snapped—very softly indeed. Then he padded in silence out among the huts, and nobody who had not seen him do it would believe how silently an elephant can move when he sees fit.

There was no thick jungle here—just soft grass, huts, approaching dark fringe that was the jungle. None of the mahouts was awake to see him. No voice called him back. The grass gave way to bamboo thickets, the smell of the huts to the wild, bewitching perfumes of the jungle.

Then, still in silence, because there are decencies to be observed by animals no less than men, he walked forward with his trunk outstretched into the primordial jungle and was born again.

III

Muztagh's reception was cordial from the very first. The great bulls of the herd stood still and lifted their ears when they heard him grunting up the hill. But he slipped among them and was forgotten at once. They had no dealings with the princes of Malay and Siam, and his light-coloured coat meant nothing whatever to them. If they did any thinking about him at all, it was just to wonder why a calf with all the evident marks of a nine-year-old should be so tall and weigh so much.

One can fancy that the great old wrinkled tusker that led the herd peered at him now and then out of his little red eyes, and wondered. A herd-leader begins to think about future contestants for his place as soon as he acquires the leadership. But *Hai!* This little one would not have his greatest strength for fifteen years.

It was a compact, medium-sized herd—vast males, mothers, old-maid elephants, long-legged and ungainly, young males just learning their strength and proud of it beyond words, and many calves. They ranged all the way in size from the great leader, who stood ten feet and weighed nearly nine thousand pounds, to little two-

hundred-and-fifty-pound babies that had been born that season. And before long the entire herd began its cautious advance into the deeper hills.

The first night in the jungle—and Muztagh found it wonderful past all dreams. The mist on his skin was the same cool joy he had expected. There were sounds, too, that set his great muscles aquiver. He heard the sound that the bamboos make—the little click-click of the stems in the wind—the soft rustle and stir of many leafy tendrils entwining and touching together, and the whisper of the wind over the jungle grass. And he knew, because it was his heritage, what every single one of these sounds meant.

The herd threaded through the dark jungle, and now they descended into a cool river. A herd of deer—either the dark sambur or black buck—sprang from the misty shore-line and leaped away into the bamboos. Farther down, he could hear the grunt of buffalo.

It was simply a caress—the touch of the soft, cool water on his flanks. Then they reared out, like great sea-gods rising from the deep, and grunted and squealed their way up the banks into the jungle again.

But the smells were the book that he read best; he understood them even better than the sounds of green things growing. Flowers that he could not see hung like bells from the arching branches. Every fern and every seeding grass had its own scent that told sweet tales. The very mud that his four feet sank into emitted scent that told the history of jungle-life from the world's beginnings. When dawn burst over the eastern hills, he was weary in every muscle of his young body, but much too happy to admit it.

This day was just the first of three thousand joyous days. The jungle, old as the world itself, is ever new. Not even the wisest elephant, who, after all, is king of the jungle, knows what will turn up at the next bend in the elephant trail. It may be a native woodcutter, whose long hair is stirred with fright. It may easily be one of the great breed of bears, large as the American grizzly, that some naturalists believe are to be found in the Siamese and Burman jungles. It may be a herd

of wild buffalo, always looking for a fight, or simply some absurd armadillo-like thing, to make him shake his vast sides with mirth.

The herd was never still. They ranged from one mysterious hill to another, to the ranges of the Himalayas and back again. There were no rivers that they did not swim, no jungles that they did not penetrate, no elephant trails that they did not follow, in the whole northeastern corner of British India. And all the time Muztagh's strength grew upon him until it became too vast a thing to measure or control.

Whether or not he kept with the herd was by now a matter of supreme indifference to him. He no longer needed its protection. Except for the men who came with the ropes and guns and shoutings, there was nothing in the jungle for him to fear. He was twenty years old, and he stood nearly eleven feet to the top of his shoulders. He would have broken any scales in the Indian Empire that tried to weigh him.

He had had his share of adventures, yet he knew that life in reality had just begun. The time would come when he would want to fight the great arrogant bull for the leadership of the herd. He was tired of fighting the young bulls of his own age. He always won, and to an elephant constant winning is almost as dull as constant losing. He was a great deal like a youth of twenty in any breed of any land—light-hearted, self-confident, enjoying every minute of wakefulness between one midnight and another. He loved the jungle smells and the jungle sounds, and he could even tolerate the horrible laughter of the hyenas that sometimes tore to shreds the silence of the grassy plains below.

But India is too thickly populated by human beings for a wild elephant to escape observation entirely. Many natives had caught sight of him, and at last the tales reached a little circle of trackers and hunters in camp on a distant range of hills. They did not work for Dugan Sahib, for Dugan Sahib was dead long since. They were a determined little group, and one night they sat and talked softly over their fire. If Muztagh's ears had been sharp enough to hear their words across the

space of hills, he wouldn't have gone to his mud-baths with such complacency the next day. But the space between them was fifty miles of sweating jungle, and of course he did not hear.

"You will go, Khusru," said the leader, "for there are none here half so skilful with horsehair rope as you. If you do not come back within twelve months, we shall know you have failed."

Of course all of them knew what he meant. If a man failed in the effort to capture a wild elephant by the hair-rope method, he very rarely lived to tell of it.

"In that case," Ahmad Din went on, "there will be a great drive after the monsoon of next year. Picked men will be chosen. No detail will be overlooked. It will cost more, but it will be sure. And our purses will be fat from the selling-price of this king of elephants with a white coat!"

IV

There is no need to follow Khusru on his long pursuit through the elephant trails. He was an able hunter and, after the manner of the elephant-trackers, the scared little man followed Muztagh through jungle and river, over hill and into dale, for countless days, and at last, as Muztagh slept, he crept up within a half-dozen feet of him. He intended to loop a horsehair rope about his great feet—one of the oldest and most hazardous methods of elephant-catching. But Muztagh wakened just in time.

And then a curious thing happened. The native could never entirely believe it, and it was one of his best stories to the day he died. Any other wild tusker would have charged in furious wrath, and there would have been a quick and certain death beneath his great knees. Muztagh started out as if he had intended to charge. He lifted his trunk out of the way—the elephant trunk is for a thousand uses, but fighting is not one of them—and sprang forward. He went just two paces. Then his little eyes caught sight of the brown figure fleeing through the bamboos. And at once the elephant set

his great feet to brake himself, and drew to a sliding halt six feet beyond.

He did not know why. He was perfectly aware that this man was an enemy, jealous of his most-loved liberty. He knew perfectly it was the man's intention to put him back into his bonds. He did not feel fear, either—because an elephant's anger is too tremendous an emotion to leave room for any other impulse such as fear. It seemed to him that memories came thronging from long ago, so real and insistent that he could not think of charging.

He remembered his days in the elephant lines. These brown creatures had been his masters then. They had cut his grass for him in the jungle, and brought him bundles of sugar-cane. The hill people say that the elephant memory is the greatest single marvel in the jungle, and it was that memory that saved Khusru then. It wasn't deliberate gratitude for the grass-cutting of long ago. It wasn't any particular emotion that he could reach out his trunk and touch. It was simply an impulse—another one of the thousand mysteries that envelop, like a cloud, the mental processes of these largest of forest creatures.

These were the days when he lived apart from the herd. He did it from choice. He liked the silence, the solitary mud-baths, the constant watchfulness against danger.

One day a rhino charged him—without warning or reason. This is quite a common thing for a rhino to do. They have the worst tempers in the jungle, and they would just as soon charge a mountain if they didn't like the look of it. Muztagh had awakened the great creature from his sleep, and he came bearing down like a tank over "no man's land."

Muztagh met him squarely, with the full shock of his tusks, and the battle ended promptly. Muztagh's tusk, driven by five tons of might behind it, would have pierced a ship's side, and the rhino limped away to let his hurt grow well and meditate revenge. Thereafter, for a full year, he looked carefully out of his bleary, drunken eyes and chose a smaller objective before he charged.

Month after month Muztagh wended alone through the elephant trails, and now and then rooted up great trees just to try his strength. Sometimes he went silently, and sometimes like an avalanche. He swam alone in the deep holes, and sometimes shut his eyes and stood on the bottom, just keeping the end of his trunk out of the water. One day he was obliged to kneel on the broad back of an alligator who tried to bite off his foot. He drove the long body down into the muddy bottom, and no living creature, except possibly the catfish that burrow in the mud, ever saw it again.

He loved the rains that flashed through the jungles, the swift-climbing dawns in the east, the strange, tense, breathless nights. And at midnight he loved to trumpet to the herd on some far-away hill, and hear, fainter than the death-cry of a beetle, its answer come back to him. At twenty-five he had reached full maturity; and no more magnificent specimen of the elephant could be found in all of British India. At last he had begun to learn his strength.

Of course he had known for years his mastery over the inanimate things of the world. He knew how easy it was to tear a tree from its roots, to jerk a great tree-limb from its socket. He knew that under most conditions he had nothing to fear from the great tigers, although a fight with a tiger is a painful thing and well to avoid. But he did not know that he had developed a craft and skill that would avail him in battle against the greatest of his own kind. He made the discovery one sunlit day beside the Manipur River.

He was in the mud-bath, grunting and bubbling with content. It was a bath with just room enough for one. And seeing that he was young, and perhaps failing to measure his size, obscured as it was in the mud, a great "rogue" bull came out of the jungles to take the bath for himself.

He was a huge creature—wrinkled and yellow-tusked and scarred from the wounds of a thousand fights. His little red eyes looked out malignantly, and he grunted all the insults the elephant tongue can compass to the youngster that lolled in the bath. He confidently ex-

pected that Muztagh would yield at once, because as a rule young twenty-five-year-olds do not care to mix in battle with the scarred and crafty veterans of sixty years. But he did not know Muztagh.

The latter had been enjoying the bath to the limit, and he had no desire whatever to give it up. Something hot and raging seemed to explode in his brain and it was as if a red glare, such as sometimes comes in the sunset, had fallen over all the stretch of river and jungle before his eyes. He squealed once, reared up with one lunge out of the bath—and charged. They met with a shock.

Of all the expressions of power in the animal world, the elephant fight is the most terrible to see. It is as if two mountains rose up from their roots of strata and went to war. It is terrible to hear, too. The jungle had been still before. The river glided softly, the wind was dead, the mid-afternoon silence was over the thickets.

The jungle people were asleep. A thunder-storm would not have broken more quickly, or could not have created a wilder pandemonium. The jungle seemed to shiver with the sound.

They squealed and bellowed and trumpeted and grunted and charged. Their tusks clicked like the noise of a giant's game of billiards. The thickets cracked and broke beneath their great feet.

It lasted only a moment. It was so easy, after all. In a very few seconds indeed, the old rogue became aware that he had made a very dangerous and disagreeable mistake. There were better mud-baths on the river, anyway.

He had not been able to land a single blow. And his wrath gave way to startled amazement when Muztagh sent home his third. The rogue did not wait for the fourth.

Muztagh chased him into the thickets. But he was too proud to chase a beaten elephant for long. He halted, trumpeting, and swung back to his mud-bath.

But he did not enter the mud again. All at once he remembered the herd and the fights of his calfhood. All at once he knew that his craft and strength and power

were beyond that of any elephant in all the jungle. Who was the great, arrogant herd-leader to stand against him? What yellow tusks were to meet his and come away unbroken?

His little eyes grew ever more red as he stood rocking back and forth, his trunk lifted to catch the sounds and smells of the distant jungle. Why should he abide alone, when he could be the ruler of the herd and the jungle king? Then he grunted softly and started away down the river. Far away, beyond the mountains and rivers and the villages of the hillfolk, the herd of his youth roamed in joyous freedom. He would find them and assert his mastery.

V

The night fire of a little band of elephant-catchers burned fitfully at the edge of the jungle. They were silent men—for they had lived long on the elephant trails—and curiously scarred and sombre. They smoked their cheroots, and waited for Ahmad Din to speak.

"You have all heard?" he asked at last.

All but one of them nodded. Of course this did not count the most despised one of them all—old Langur Dass—who sat at the very edge of the shadow. His long hair was grey, and his youth had gone where the sun goes at evening. They scarcely addressed a word to him, or he to them. True, he knew the elephants, but was he not possessed of evil spirits? He was always without rupees, too, a creature of the wild that could not seem to understand the gathering of money. As a man, according to the standards of men, he was an abject failure.

"Khusru has failed to catch White-Skin, but he has lived to tell many lies about it. He comes to-night."

It was noticeable that Langur Dass, at the edge of the circle, pricked up his ears.

"Do you mean the white elephant of which the Manipur people tell so many lies?" he asked. "Do you, skilled catchers that you are, believe that such an elephant is still wild in the jungle?"

Ahmad Din scowled. "The Manipur people tell of him, but for once they tell the truth," was the reply. "He is the greatest elephant, the richest prize, in all of Burma. Too many people have seen him to doubt. I add my word to theirs, thou son of immorality!"

Ahmad Din hesitated a moment before he continued. Perhaps it was a mistake to tell of the great, light-coloured elephant until this man should have gone away. But what harm could this wanderer do them? All men knew that the jungle had maddened him.

Langur Dass's face lit suddenly. "Then it could be none but Muztagh, escaped from Dugan Sahib fifteen years ago. That calf was also white. He was also overgrown for his years."

One of the trackers suddenly gasped. "Then that is why he spared Khusru!" he cried. "He remembered men."

The others nodded gravely. "They never forget," said Langur Dass.

"You will be silent while I speak," Ahmad Din went on. Langur grew silent as commanded, but his thoughts were flowing backward twenty years, to days at the elephant lines in distant hills. Muztagh was the one living creature that in all his days had loved Langur Dass. The man shut his eyes, and his limbs seemed to relax as if he had lost all interest in the talk. The evil one took hold of him at such times, the people said, letting understanding follow his thoughts back into the purple hills and the far-off spaces of the jungle. But to-night he was only pretending. He meant to hear every word of the talk before he left the circle.

"He tells a mad story, as you know, of the elephant sparing him when he was beneath his feet," Ahmad Din went on; "that part of his story does not matter to us. *Hai!* He might have been frightened enough to say that the sun set at noon. But what matters to us more is that he knows where the herd is—but a day's journey beyond the river. And there is no time to be lost."

His fellows nodded in agreement.

"So to-morrow we will break camp. There can be no mistake this time. There must be no points over-

looked. The chase will cost much, but it will return a hundredfold. Khusru says that at last the white one has started back toward his herd, so that all can be taken in the same *keddah*. And the white sahib that holds the license is not to know that White-Coat is in the herd at all."

The circle nodded again, and contracted toward the speaker.

"We will hire beaters and drivers, the best that can be found. To-morrow we will take the elephants and go."

Langur Dass pretended to waken. "I have gone hungry many days," he said. "If the drive is on, perhaps you will give your servant a place among the beaters."

The circle turned and stared at him. It was one of the stories of Langur Dass that he never partook in the elephant hunts. Evidently poor living had broken his resolutions.

"You shall have your wish, if you know how to keep a closed mouth," Ahmad Din replied. "There are other hunting parties in the hills."

Langur nodded. He was very adept indeed at keeping a closed mouth. It is one of the first lessons of the jungle.

For another long hour they sat and perfected their plans. Then they lay down by the fire together, and sleep dropped over them one by one. At last Langur sat by the fire alone.

"You will watch the flame to-night," Ahmad Din ordered. "We did not feed you to-night for pity on your grey hairs. And remember—a gipsy died in a tiger's claws on this very slope—not six months past."

Langur Dass was left alone with his thoughts. Soon he got up and stole out into the velvet darkness. The mists were over the hills as always.

"Have I followed the tales of your greatness all these years for this?" he muttered. "It is right for pigs with the hearts of pigs to break their backs in labour. But you, my Muztagh! Jewel among elephants! King of the jungle! Thou art of the true breed! Moreover I am minded that thy heart and mine are one!

"Thou art born ten thousand years after thy time, Muztagh," he went on. "Thou art of the breed of masters, not of slaves! We are of the same womb, thou and I. Can I not understand? These are not my people—these brown men about the fire. I have not thy strength, Muztagh, or I would be out there with thee! Yet is not the saying that brother shall serve brother?"

He turned slowly back to the circle of the firelight. Then his brown, scrawny fingers clenched.

"Am I to desert my brother in his hour of need? Am I to see these brown pigs put chains around him, in the moment of his power? A king, falling to the place of a slave? Muztagh, we will see what can be done! Muztagh, my king, my pearl, my pink baby, for whom I dug grass in the long ago! Thy Langur Dass is old, and his whole strength is not that of thy trunk, and men look at him as a worm in the grass. But *hai!* perhaps thou wilt find him an ally not to be despised!"

VI

The night had just fallen, moist and heavy over the jungle, when Muztagh caught up with his herd. He found them in an open grassy glade, encircled by hills, and they were all waiting, silent, as he sped down the hills toward them. They had heard him coming a long way. He was not attempting silence. The jungle people had not got out of his way.

The old bull that led the herd, seventy years of age and at the pride of his wisdom and strength, scarred, yellow-tusked and noble past any elephant patriarch in the jungle, curled up his trunk when he saw him come. He knew very well what would happen. And because no one knows better than the jungle people what a good thing it is to take the offensive in all battles, and because it was fitting his place and dignity, he uttered the challenge himself.

The silence dropped as something from the sky. The little pink calves who had never seen the herd grow still in this same way before, felt the dawn of the storm that they could not understand, and took shelter beneath

their mothers' bellies. But they did not squeal. The silence was too deep for them to dare to break.

It is always an epoch in the life of the herd when a young bull contests for leadership. It is a much more serious thing than in the herds of deer and buffalo. The latter only live a handful of years, then grow weak and die. A great bull who has attained strength and wisdom enough to obtain the leadership of an elephant herd may often keep it for forty years. Kings do not rise and fall half so often as in the kingdoms of Europe. For, as most men know, an elephant is not really old until he has seen a hundred summers come and go. Then he will linger fifty years more, wise and grey and wrinkled and strange and full of memories of a time no man can possibly remember.

Long years had passed since the leader's place had been questioned. The aristocracy of strength is drawn on quite inflexible lines. It would have been simply absurd for an elephant of the Dwasila or Mierga grades to covet the leadership. They had grown old without making the attempt. Only the great Kumiria, the grand dukes in the aristocracy, had ever made the trial at all. And besides, the bull was a better fighter after thirty years of leadership than on the day he had gained the honour.

The herd stood like heroic figures in stone for a long moment—until Muztagh had replied to the challenge. He was so surprised that he couldn't make any sound at all at first. He had expected to do the challenging himself. The fact that the leader had done it shook his self-confidence to some slight degree. Evidently the old leader still felt able to handle any young and arrogant bulls that desired his place.

Then the herd began to shift. The cows drew back with their calves, the bulls surged forward, and slowly they made a hollow ring, not greatly different from the pugilistic ring known to fight-fans. The calves began to squeal, but their mothers silenced them. Very slowly and grandly, with infinite dignity, Muztagh stamped into the circle. His tusks gleamed. His eyes glowed red. And those appraising old bulls in the ring knew that such

an elephant had not been born since the time of their grandfathers.

They looked him over from tail to trunk. They marked the symmetrical form, the legs like mighty pillars, the sloping back, the wide-apart, intelligent eyes. His shoulders were an expression of latent might—power to break a tree-trunk at its base; by the conformity of his muscles he was agile and quick as a tiger. And knowing these things, and recognizing them, and honouring them, devotees of strength that they were, they threw their trunks in the air till they touched their foreheads and blared their full-voiced salute.

They gave it the same instant—as musicians strike the same note at their leader's signal. It was a perfect explosion of sound, a terrible blare, that crashed out through the jungles and wakened every sleeping thing. The dew fell from the trees. A great tawny tiger, lingering in hope of an elephant calf, slipped silently away. The sound rang true and loud to the surrounding hills and echoed and re-echoed softer and softer, until it was just a tiny tremour in the air.

Not only the jungle folk marvelled at the sound. At an encampment three miles distant Ahmad Din and his men heard the wild call, and looked with wondering eyes upon each other. Then out of the silence spoke Langur Dass.

"My lord Muztagh has come back to his herd—that is his salute," he said.

Ahmad Din looked darkly about the circle. "And how long shall he stay?" he asked.

The trap was almost ready. The hour to strike had almost come.

Meanwhile the grand old leader stamped into the circle, seeming unconscious of the eyes upon him, battle-scarred and old. Even if this fight were his last, he meant to preserve his dignity.

Again the salute sounded—shattering out like a thunderclap over the jungle. Then challenger and challenged closed.

At first the watchers were silent. Then as the battle grew ever fiercer and more terrible, they began to grunt

and squeal, surging back and forth, stamping the earth and crashing the underbrush. All the jungle-folk for miles about knew what was occurring. And Ahmad Din wished his *keddah* were completed, for never could there be a better opportunity to surround the herd than at the present moment, when they had forgotten all things except the battling monsters in the centre of the ring.

The two bulls were quite evenly matched. The patriarch knew more of fighting, had learned more wiles, but he had neither the strength nor the agility of Muztagh. The late twilight deepened into the intense dark, and the stars of midnight rose above the eastern hills.

All at once, Muztagh went to his knees. But as might a tiger, he sprang aside in time to avoid a terrible tusk blow to his shoulder. And his counter-blow, a lashing cut with the head, shattered the great leader to the earth. The elephants bounded forward, but the old leader had a trick left in his trunk. As Muztagh bore down upon him he reared up beneath, and almost turned the tables. Only the youngster's superior strength saved him from immediate defeat.

But as the night drew to morning, the bulls began to see that the tide of the battle had turned. Youth was conquering—too mighty and agile to resist. The rushes of the patriarch were ever weaker. He still could inflict punishment and the hides of both of them were terrible to see, but he was no longer able to take advantage of his openings. Then Muztagh did a thing that reassured the old bulls as to his craft and wisdom. Just as a pugilist will invite a blow to draw his opponent within range, Muztagh pretended to leave his great shoulder exposed. The old bull failed to see the plot. He bore down, and Muztagh was ready with flashing tusk.

What happened thereafter occurred too quickly for the eyes of the elephants to follow. They saw the great bull go down and Muztagh stand lunging above him. And the battle was over.

The great leader, seriously hurt, backed away into the shadowed jungle. His trunk was lowered in token of defeat. Then the ring was empty except for a great red-

eyed elephant, whose hide was no longer white, standing blaring his triumph to the stars.

Three times the elephant salute crashed out into the jungle silence—the full-voiced salaam to a new king. Muztagh had come into his birthright.

VII

The *keddah* was built at last. It was a strong stockade, opening with great wings spreading out one hundred yards, and equipped with the great gate that lowered like a portcullis at the funnel end of the wings. The herd had been surrounded by the drivers and beaters, and slowly they had been driven, for long days, toward the *keddah* mouth. They had guns loaded with blank cartridges, and firebrands ready to light. At a given signal they would close down quickly about the herd, and stampede it into the yawning mouth of the stockade.

No detail had been overlooked. No expense had been spared. The profit was assured in advance, not only from the matchless Muztagh, but from the herd as well. The king of the jungle, free now as the winds or the waters, was about to go back to his chains. These had been such days! He had led the herd through the hills, and had known the rapture of living as never before. It had been his work to clear the trail of all dangers for the herd. It was his pride to find them the coolest watering-places, the greenest hills. One night a tiger had tried to kill a calf that had wandered from its mother's side. Muztagh lifted his trunk high and charged down with great, driving strides—four tons and over of majestic wrath. The tiger leaped to meet him, but the elephant was ready. He had met tigers before. He avoided the terrible stroke of outstretched claws, and his tusks lashed to one side as the tiger was in midspring. Then he lunged out, and the great knees descended slowly, as a hydraulic press descends on yellow apples. And soon after that the kites were dropping out of the sky for a feast.

His word was law in the herd. And slowly he began to overcome the doubt that the great bulls had of him

—doubt of his youth and experience. If he had had three months more of leadership, their trust would have been absolute. But in the meantime, the slow herding toward the *keddah* had begun.

"We will need brave men to stand at the end of the wings of the *keddah*," said Ahmad Din. He spoke no less than truth. The man who stands at the end of the wings, or wide-stretching gates, of the *keddah* is of course in the greatest danger of being charged and killed. The herd, mad with fright, is only slightly less afraid of the spreading wings of the stockade than of the yelling, whooping beaters behind. Often they will try to break through the circle rather than enter the wings.

"For two rupees additional I will hold one of the wings," replied old Langur Dass. Ahmad Din glanced at him—at his hard, bright eyes and determined face. Then he peered hard, and tried in vain to read the thoughts behind the eyes. "You are a madman, Langur Dass," he said wonderingly. "But thou shalt lie behind the right-wing men to pass them torches. I have spoken."

"And the two extra rupees?" Langur asked cunningly.

"Maybe." One does not throw away rupees in Upper Burma.

Within the hour the signal of "*Maîl, maîl!*" (Go on, go on!) was given, and the final laps of the drive began.

The hills grew full of sound. The beaters sprang up with firebrand and rifle, and closed swiftly about the herd. The animals moved slowly at first. The time was not quite ripe to throw them into a panic. Many times the herd would leave their trail and start to dip into a valley or a creek-bed, but always there was a new crowd of beaters to block their path. But presently the beaters closed in on them. Then the animals began a wild descent squarely toward the mouth of the *keddah*.

"*Hai!*" the wild men cried. "Oh, you forest pigs! On, on! Block the way through that valley, you brainless sons of jackals! Are you afraid? *Ai!* Stand close! Watch, Puran! Guard your post, Khusru! Now on, on—do not let them halt! *Arre! Aihai!*"

Firebrands waved, rifles cracked, the wild shout of

beaters increased in volume. The men closed in, driving the beasts before them.

But there was one man that did not raise his voice. Through all the turmoil and pandemonium he crouched at the end of the stockade wing, tense and silent and alone. To one that could have looked into his eyes, it would have seemed that his thoughts were far and far away. It was just old Langur Dass, named for a monkey and despised of men.

He was waiting for the instant that the herd would come thundering down the hill, in order to pass lighted firebrands to the bold men who held that corner. He was not certain that he could do the thing he had set out to do. Perhaps the herd would sweep past him, through the gates. If he did win, he would have to face alone the screaming, infuriated hillmen, whose knives were always ready to draw. But knives did not matter now. Langur Dass had only his own faith and his own creed, and no fear could make him betray them.

Muztagh had lost control of his herd. At their head ran the old leader that he had worsted. In their hour of fear they had turned back to him. What did this youngster know of elephant-drives? Ever the waving firebrands drew nearer, the beaters lessened their circle, the avenues of escape became more narrow. The yawning arms of the stockade stretched just beyond.

"Will I win, jungle gods?" a little grey man at the *keddah* wing was whispering to the forests. "Will I save you, great one that I knew in babyhood? Will you go down into chains before the night is done? *Ai!* I hear the thunder of your feet! The moment is almost here. And now—your last chance, Muztagh!"

"Close down, close down!" Ahmad Din was shouting to his beaters. "The thing is done in another moment. Hasten, pigs of the hills! Raise your voice! Now! *Aihai!*"

The herd was at the very wings of the stockade. They had halted an instant, milling, and the beaters increased their shouts. Only one of all the herd seemed to know the danger—Muztagh himself, and he had dropped from the front rank to the very rear. He stood with uplifted

trunk, facing the approaching rows of beaters. And there seemed to be no break in the whole line.

The herd started to move on, into the wings of captivity; and they did not heed his warning squeals to turn. The circle of fire drew nearer. Then his trunk seemed to droop, and he turned, too. He could not break the line. He turned, too, toward the mouth of the *keddah*.

But even as he turned, a brown figure darted toward him from the end of the wing. A voice known long ago was calling to him—a voice that penetrated high and clear above the babble of the beaters. "Muztagh!" it was crying. "Muztagh!"

But it was not the words that turned Muztagh. An elephant cannot understand words, except a few elemental sounds such as a horse or dog can learn. Rather it was the smell of the man, remembered from long ago, and the sound of his voice, never quite forgotten. For an elephant never forgets.

"Muztagh! Muztagh!"

The elephant knew him now. He remembered his one friend among all the human beings that he knew in his calfhood; the one mortal from whom he had received love and given love in exchange.

"More firebrands!" yelled the men who held that corner of the wing. "Firebrands! Where is Langur Dass?" but instead of firebrands that would have frightened beast and aided men, Langur Dass stepped out from behind a tree and beat at the heads of the right-wing guards with a bamboo cane that whistled and whacked and scattered them into panic—yelling all the while—"Muztagh! O my Muztagh! Here is an opening! Muztagh, come!"

And Muztagh did come—trumpeting—crashing like an avalanche, with Langur Dass hard after him, afraid, now that he had done the trick. And hot on the trail of Langur Dass ran Ahmad Din, with his knife drawn, not meaning to let that prize be lost to him at less than the cost of the trickster's life.

But it was not written that the knife should ever enter the flesh of Langur Dass.

The elephant never forgets, and Muztagh was mon-

arch of his breed. He turned back two paces, and struck with his trunk. Ahmad Din was knocked aside as the wind whips a straw.

For an instant elephant and man stood front to front. To the left of them the gates of the stockade dropped shut behind the herd. The elephant stood with trunk slightly lifted, for the moment motionless. The long-haired man who had saved him stood lifting upstretched arms.

It was such a scene as one might remember in an old legend, wherein beasts and men were brothers, or such as sometimes might steal, like something remembered from another age, into a man's dreams. Nowhere but in India, where men have a little knowledge of the mystery of the elephant, could it have taken place at all.

For Langur Dass was speaking to my lord the elephant:

"Take me with thee, Muztagh! Monarch of the hills! Thou and I are not of the world of men, but of the jungle and the rain, the silence, and the cold touch of rivers. We are brothers, Muztagh. O beloved, wilt thou leave me here to die!"

The elephant slowly turned his head and looked scornfully at the group of beaters bearing down on Langur Dass, murder shining no less from their knives than from their lighted eyes.

"Take me," the old man pleaded; "thy herd is gone."

The elephant seemed to know what he was asking. He had lifted him to his great shoulders many times, in the last days of his captivity. And besides, his old love for Langur Dass had never been forgotten. It all returned, full and strong as ever. For an elephant never can forget.

It was not one of the man-herd that stood pleading before him. It was one of his own jungle people, just as, deep in his heart, he had always known. So with one motion light as air, he swung him gently to his shoulder.

The jungle, vast and mysterious and still, closed its gates behind them.

TURKEY RED

By FRANCES GILCHRIST WOOD

From *Pictorial Review*

THE old mail-sled running between Haney and Le Beau, in the days when Dakota was still a Territory, was nearing the end of its hundred-mile route.

It was a desolate country in those days; geographers still described it as The Great American Desert, and in looks it deserved the title. Never was there anything so lonesome as that endless stretch of snow reaching across the world until it cut into a cold grey sky, excepting the same desert burned to a brown tinder by the hot wind of summer.

Nothing but sky and plain and its voice, the wind, unless you might count a lonely sod shack blocked against the horizon, miles away from a neighbour, miles from anywhere, its red-curtained square of window glowing through the early twilight.

There were three men in the sled; Dan, the mail-carrier, crusty, belligerently Western, the self-elected guardian of every one on his route; Hillas, a younger man, hardly more than a boy, living on his pre-emption claim near the upper reaches of the stage line; the third a stranger from that part of the country vaguely defined as "the East." He was travelling, had given him name as Smith, and was as inquisitive about the country as he was reticent about his business there. Dan plainly disapproved of him.

They had driven the last cold miles in silence when the stage-driver turned to his neighbour. "Letter didn't say anything about coming out in the spring to look over the country, did it?"

Hillas shook his head. "It was like all the rest, Dan. Don't want to build a railroad at all until the country's settled."

"God! Can't they see the other side of it? What it means to the folks already here to wait for it?"

The stranger thrust a suddenly interested profile above the handsome collar of his fur coat. He looked out over the waste of snow.

"You say there's no timber here?"

Dan maintained unfriendly silence and Hillas answered: "Nothing but scrub on the banks of the creeks. Years of prairie fires have burned out the trees, we think."

"Any ores—mines?"

The boy shook his head as he slid farther down in his worn buffalo coat of the plains.

"We're too busy rustling for something to eat first. And you can't develop mines without tools."

"Tools?"

"Yes, a railroad first of all."

Dan shifted the lines from one fur-mittened hand to the other, swinging the freed numbed arm in rhythmic beating against his body as he looked along the horizon a bit anxiously. The stranger shivered visibly.

"It's a god-forsaken country. Why don't you get out?"

Hillas, following Dan's glance around the blurred sky line, answered absently, "Usual answer is 'Leave? It's all I can do to stay here.'"

Smith regarded him irritably. "Why should any sane man ever have chosen this frozen wilderness?"

Hillas closed his eyes wearily. "We came in the spring."

"I see!" The edged voice snapped, "Visionaries!"

Hillas's eyes opened again, wide, and then the boy was looking beyond the man with the far-seeing eyes of the plainsman. He spoke under his breath as if he were alone.

"Visionary, pioneer, American. That was the evolution in the beginning. Perhaps that is what we are." Suddenly the endurance in his voice went down before

a wave of bitterness. "The first pioneers had to wait, too. How could they stand it so long!"

The young shoulders drooped as he thrust stiff fingers deep within the shapeless coat pockets. He slowly withdrew his right hand holding a parcel wrapped in brown paper. He tore a three-cornered flap in the cover, looked at the brightly coloured contents, replaced the flap and returned the parcel, his chin a little higher.

Dan watched the northern sky-line restlessly. "It won't be snow. Look like a blizzard to you, Hillas?"

The traveller sat up. "Blizzard?"

"Yes," Dan drawled in willing contribution to his uneasiness, "the real Dakota article where blizzards are made. None of your eastern imitations, but a ninety-mile wind that whets slivers of ice off the frozen drifts all the way down from the North Pole. Only one good thing about a blizzard—it's over in a hurry. You get to shelter or you freeze to death."

A gust of wind flung a powder of snow stingingly against their faces. The traveller withdrew his head turtlewise within the handsome collar in final condemnation. "No man in his senses would ever have deliberately come here to live."

Dan turned. "Wouldn't, eh?"

"No."

"You're American?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was born here. It's my country."

"Ever read about your Pilgrim Fathers?"

"Why, of course."

"Frontiersmen, same as us. You're living on what they did. We're getting this frontier ready for those who come after. Want our children to have a better chance than we had. Our reason's same as theirs. Hillas told you the truth. Country's all right if we had a railroad."

"Humph!" With a contemptuous look across the desert. "Where's your freight, your grain, cattle——"

"*West*-bound freight, coal, feed, seed-grain, work, and more neighbours."

"One-sided bargain. Road that hauls empties one way doesn't pay. No company would risk a line through here."

The angles of Dan's jaw showed white. "Maybe. Ever get a chance to pay your debt to those Pilgrim pioneers? Ever take it? Think the stock was worth saving?"

He lifted his whip-handle toward a pin-point of light across the stretch of snow. "Donovan lives over there and Mis' Donovan. We call them 'old folks' now; their hair has turned white as these drifts in two years. All they've got is here. He's a real farmer and a lot of help to the country, but they won't last long like this."

Dan swung his arm toward a glimmer nor' by nor'east. "Mis' Clark lives there, a mile back from the stage road. Clark's down in Yankton earning money to keep them going. She's alone with her baby holding down the claim." Dan's arm sagged. "We've had women go crazy out here."

The whip-stock followed the empty horizon half round the compass to a lighted red square not more than two miles away. "Mis' Carson died in the spring. Carson stayed until he was too poor to get away. There's three children—oldest's Katy, just eleven." Dan's words failed, but his eyes told. "Somebody will brag of them as ancestors some day. They'll deserve it if they live through this."

Dan's jaw squared as he leveled his whip-handle straight at the traveller. "I've answered your questions, now you answer mine! We know your opinion of the country—you're not travelling for pleasure or your health. What are you here for?"

"Business. My own!"

"There's two kinds of business out here this time of year. 'Tain't healthy for either of them." Dan's words were measured and clipped. "You've damned the West and all that's in it good and plenty. Now I say, damn the people anywhere in the whole country that won't pay their debts from pioneer to pioneer; that lets us fight the wilderness barehanded and die fighting; that won't risk——"

A grey film dropped down over the world, a leaden shroud that was not the coming of twilight. Dan jerked about, his whip cracked out over the heads of the leaders and they broke into a quick trot. The shriek of the runners along the frozen snow cut through the ominous darkness.

"Hillas," Dan's voice came sharply, "stand up and look for the light on Clark's guide-pole about a mile to the right. God help us if it ain't burning."

Hillas struggled up, one clumsy mitten thatching his eyes from the blinding needles. "I don't see it, Dan. We can't be more than a mile away. Hadn't you better break toward it?"

"Got to keep the track 'til we—see—light!"

The wind tore the words from his mouth as it struck them in lashing fury. The leaders had disappeared in a wall of snow, but Dan's lash whistled forward in reminding authority. There was a moment's lull.

"See it, Hillas?"

"No, Dan."

Tiger-like the storm leaped again, bandying them about in its paws like captive mice. The horses swerved before the punishing blows, bunched, backed, tangled. Dan stood up shouting his orders of menacing appeal above the storm.

Again a breathing space before the next deadly impact. As it came Hillas shouted, "I see it—there, Dan! It's a red light. She's in trouble."

Through the whirling smother and chaos of Dan's cries and the struggling horses the sled lunged out of the road into unbroken drifts. Again the leaders swung sidewise before the lashing of a thousand lariats of ice and bunched against the wheel-horses. Dan swore, prayed, mastered them with far-reaching lash, then the off leader went down. Dan felt behind him for Hillas and shoved the reins against his arm.

"I'll get him up—or cut leaders—loose! If I don't—come back—drive to light. *Don't—get—out!*"

Dan disappeared in the white fury. There were sounds of a struggle; the sled jerked sharply and stood still. Slowly it strained forward.

Hillas was standing, one foot outside on the runner, as they travelled a team's length ahead. He gave a cry —"Dan! Dan!" and gripped a furry bulk that lumbered up out of the drift.

"All—right—son." Dan reached for the reins.

Frantically they fought their slow way toward the blurred light, staggering on in a fight with the odds too savage to last. They stopped abruptly as the winded leaders leaned against a wall interposed between themselves and insatiable fury.

Dan stepped over the dashboard, groped his way along the tongue between the wheel-horses and reached the leeway of a shadowy square. "It's the shed, Hillas. Help get the team in." The exhausted animals crowded into the narrow space without protest.

"Find the guide-rope to the house, Dan?"

"On the other side, toward the shack. Where's—Smith?"

"Here, by the shed."

Dan turned toward the stranger's voice.

"We're going 'round to the blizzard-line tied from shed to shack. Take hold of it and don't let go. If you do you'll freeze before we can find you. When the wind comes, turn your back and wait. Go on when it dies down and never let go the rope. Ready? The wind's dropped. Here, Hillas, next to me."

Three blurs hugged the sod walls around to the northeast corner. The forward shadow reached upward to a swaying rope, lifted the hand of the second who guided the third.

"Hang on to my belt, too, Hillas. Ready—Smith? Got the rope?"

They crawled forward, three barely visible figures, six, eight, ten steps. With a shriek the wind tore at them, beat the breath from their bodies, cut them with stinging needle-points and threw them aside. Dan reached back to make sure of Hillas who fumbled through the darkness for the stranger.

Slowly they struggled ahead, the cold growing more intense; two steps, four, and the mounting fury of the blizzard reached its zenith. The blurs swayed like bat-

tered leaves on a vine that the wind tore in two at last and flung the living beings wide. Dan, clinging to the broken rope, rolled over and found Hillas with the frayed end of the line in his hand, reaching about through the black drifts for the stranger. Dan crept closer, his mouth at Hillas's ear, shouting, "Quick! Right behind me if we're to live through it!"

The next moment Hillas let go the rope. Dan reached madly. "Boy, you can't find him—it'll only be two instead of one! Hillas! Hillas!"

The storm screamed louder than the plainsman and began heaping the snow over three obstructions in its path, two that groped slowly and one that lay still. Dan fumbled at his belt, unfastened it, slipped the rope through the buckle, knotted it and crept its full length back toward the boy. A snow-covered something moved forward guiding another, one arm groping in blind search, reached and touched the man clinging to the belt.

Beaten and buffeted by the ceaseless fury that no longer gave quarter, they slowly fought their way hand-over-hand along the rope, Dan now crawling last. After a frozen eternity they reached the end of the line fastened man-high against a second haven of wall. Hillas pushed open the unlocked door, the three men staggered in and fell panting against the side of the room.

The stage-driver recovered first, pulled off his mittens, examined his fingers and felt quickly of nose, ears, and chin. He looked sharply at Hillas and nodded. Unceremoniously they stripped off the stranger's gloves, reached for a pan, opened the door, dipped it into the drift and plunged Smith's fingers down in the snow.

"Your nose is white, too. Thaw it out."

Abruptly Dan indicated a bench against the wall where the two men seated would take up less space.

"I'm——" The stranger's voice was unsteady. "I——," but Dan had turned his back and his attention to the homesteader.

The eight by ten room constituted the entire home. A shed roof slanted from eight feet high on the door and window side to a bit more than five on the other.

A bed in one corner took up most of the space, and the remaining necessities were bestowed with the compactness of a ship's cabin. The rough boards of the roof and walls had been hidden by a covering of newspapers, with a row of illustrations pasted picture height. Cushions and curtains of turkey-red calico brightened the homely shack.

The driver had slipped off his buffalo coat and was bending over a baby exhaustedly fighting for breath that whistled shrilly through a closing throat. The mother, scarcely more than a girl, held her in tensely extended arms.

"How long's she been this way?"

"She began to choke up day before yesterday, just after you passed on the down trip."

The driver laid big finger tips on the restless wrist.

"She always has the croup when she cuts a tooth, Dan, but this is different. I've used all the medicines I have—nothing relieves the choking."

The girl lifted heavy eyelids above blue semicircles of fatigue and the compelling terror back of her eyes forced a question through dry lips.

"Dan, do you know what membranous croup is like? Is this it?"

The stage-driver picked up the lamp and held it close to the child's face, bringing out with distressing clearness the blue-veined pallour, sunken eyes, and effort of impeded breathing. He frowned, putting the lamp back quickly.

"Mebbe it is, Mis' Clark, but don't you be scared. We'll help you a spell."

Dan lifted the red curtain from the cupboard, found an emptied lard-pail, half filled it with water and placed it on an oil-stove that stood in the center of the room. He looked questioningly about the four walls, discovered a cleverly contrived tool-box beneath the cupboard shelves, sorted out a pair of pincers and bits of iron, laying the latter in a row over the oil blaze. He took down a can of condensed milk, poured a spoonful of the thick stuff into a cup of water and made room for it near the bits of heating iron.

He turned to the girl, opened his lips as if to speak and stood with a face full of pity.

Along the four-foot space between the end of the bed and the opposite wall the girl walked, crooning to the sick child she carried. As they watched, the low song died away, her shoulder rubbed heavily against the boarding, her eyelids dropped and she stood sound asleep. The next hard-drawn breath of the baby roused her and she stumbled on, crooning a lullaby.

Smith clutched the younger man's shoulder. "God, Hillas, look where she's marked the wall rubbing against it! Do you suppose she's been walking that way for three days and nights? Why, she's only a child—no older than my own daughter!"

Hillas nodded.

"Where are her people? Where's her husband?"

"Down in Yankton, Dan told you, working for the winter. Got to have the money to live."

"Where's the doctor?"

"Nearest one's in Haney—four days' trip away by stage."

The traveller stared, frowningly.

Dan was looking about the room again and after prodding the gay seat in the corner, lifted the cover and picked up a folded blanket, shaking out the erstwhile padded cushion. He hung the blanket over the back of a chair.

"Mis' Clark, there's nothing but steam will touch membreenous croup. We saved my baby that way last year. Set here and I'll fix things."

He put the steaming lard-pail on the floor beside the mother and lifted the blanket over the baby's head. She put up her hand.

"She's so little, Dan, and weak. How am I going to know if she—if she——"

Dan rearranged the blanket tent. "Jest get under with her yourself, Mis' Clark, then you'll know all that's happening."

With the pincers he picked up a bit of hot iron and dropped it hissing into the pail, which he pushed beneath the tent. The room was oppressively quiet, walled in

by the thick sod from the storm. The blanket muffled the sound of the child's breathing and the girl no longer stumbled against the wall.

Dan lifted the corner of the blanket and another bit of iron hissed as it struck the water. The older man leaned toward the younger.

"Stove—fire?" with a gesture of protest against the inadequate oil blaze.

Hillas whispered, "Can't afford it. Coal is $9.00 in Haney, $18.00 here."

They sat with heads thrust forward, listening in the intolerable silence. Dan lifted the blanket, hearkened a moment, then—"pst!" another bit of iron fell into the pail. Dan stooped to the tool-chest for a reserve supply when a strangling cough made him spring to his feet and hurriedly lift the blanket.

The child was beating the air with tiny fists, fighting for breath. The mother stood rigid, arms out.

"Turn her this way!" Dan shifted the struggling child, face out. "Now watch out for the——"

The strangling cough broke and a horrible something —"It's the membrane! She's too weak—let me have her!"

Dan snatched the child and turned it face downward. The blue-faced baby fought in a supreme effort—again the horrible something—then Dan laid the child, white and motionless, in her mother's arms. She held the limp body close, her eyes wide with fear.

"Dan, is—is she——?"

A faint sobbing breath of relief fluttered the pale lips that moved in the merest ghost of a smile. The heavy eyelids half-lifted and the child nestled against its mother's breast. The girl swayed, shaking with sobs, "Baby—baby!"

She struggled for self-control and stood up straight and pale. "Dan, I ought to tell you. When it began to get dark with the storm and time to put up the lantern, I was afraid to leave the baby. If she strangled when I was gone—with no one to help her—she would die!"

Her lips quivered as she drew the child closer. "I

didn't go right away but—I did—at last. I propped her up in bed and ran. If I hadn't——" Her eyes were wide with the shadowy edge of horror, "if I hadn't —you'd have been lost in the blizzard and—my baby would have died!"

She stood before the men as if for judgment, her face wet with unchecked tears. Dan patted her shoulder dumbly and touched a fresh, livid bruise that ran from the curling hair on her temple down across cheek and chin.

"Did you get this then?"

She nodded. "The storm threw me against the pole when I hoisted the lantern. I thought I'd—never—get back!"

It was Smith who translated Dan's look of appeal for the cup of warm milk and held it to the girl's lips.

"Drink it, Mis' Clark, you need it."

She made heroic attempts to swallow, her head drooped lower over the cup and fell against the driver's rough sleeve. "Poor kid, dead asleep!"

Dan guided her stumbling feet toward the bed that the traveller sprang to open. She guarded the baby in the protecting angle of her arm into safety upon the pillow, then fell like a log beside her. Dan slipped off the felt boots, lifted her feet to the bed and softly drew covers over mother and child.

"Poor kid, but she's grit, clear through!"

Dan walked to the window, looked out at the lessening storm, then at the tiny alarm-clock on the cupboard. "Be over pretty soon now!" He seated himself by the table, dropped his head wearily forward on folded arms and was asleep.

The traveller's face had lost some of its shrewdness. It was as if the white frontier had seized and shaken him into a new conception of life. He moved restlessly along the bench, then stepped softly to the side of the bed and straightened the coverlet into greater nicety while his lips twitched.

With consuming care he folded the blanket and restored the corner seat to its accustomed appearance of luxury. He looked about the room, picked up the grey

kitten sleeping contentedly on the floor and settled it on the red cushion with anxious attention to comfort.

He examined with curiosity the few books carefully covered on a corner shelf, took down an old hand-tooled volume and lifted his eyebrows at the ancient coat of arms on the book plate. He tiptoed across to the bench and pointed to the script beneath the plate. "Edward Winslow (7) to his dear daughter, Alice (8)."

He motioned toward the bed. "Her name?"

Hillas nodded, Smith grinned. "Dan's right. Blood will tell, even to damning the rest of us."

He sat down on the bench. "I understand more than I did, Hillas, since—you crawled back after me—out there. But how can you stand it here? I know you and the Clarks are people of education and, oh, all the rest; you could make your way anywhere."

Hillas spoke slowly. "I think you have to live here to know. It means something to be a pioneer. You can't be one if you've got it in you to be a quitter. The country will be all right some day." He reached for his greatcoat, bringing out a brown-paper parcel. He smiled at it oddly and went on as if talking to himself.

"When the drought and the hot winds come in the summer and burn the buffalo grass to a tinder and the monotony of the plains weighs on you as it does now, there's a common, low-growing cactus scattered over the prairie that blooms into the gayest red flower you ever saw.

"It wouldn't count for much anywhere else, but the pluck of it, without rain for months, dew even. It's the 'colours of courage.'"

He turned the torn parcel, showing the bright red within, and looked at the cupboard and window with shining, tired eyes.

"Up and down the frontier in these shacks, homes, you'll find things made of turkey-red calico, cheap, common elsewhere——" He fingered the three-cornered flap. "It's our 'colours.'" He put the parcel back in his pocket. "I bought two yards yesterday after—I got a letter at Haney."

Smith sat looking at the gay curtains before him.

The fury of the storm was dying down into fitful gusts. Dan stirred, looked quickly toward the bed, then the window, and got up quietly.

"I'll hitch up. We'll stop at Peterson's and tell her to come over." He closed the door noiselessly.

The traveller was frowning intently. Finally he turned toward the boy who sat with his head leaning back against the wall, eyes closed.

"Hillas," his very tones were awkward, "they call me a shrewd business man. I am, it's a selfish job and I'm not reforming now. But twice to-night you—children have risked your lives, without thought, for a stranger. I've been thinking about that railroad. Haven't you raised any grain or cattle that could be used for freight?"

The low answer was toneless. "Drought killed the crops, prairie fires burned the hay, of course the cattle starved."

"There's no timber, ore, nothing that could be used for east-bound shipment?"

The plainsman looked searchingly into the face of the older man. "There's no timber this side the Missouri. Across the river it's reservation—Sioux. We——" He frowned and stopped.

Smith stood up, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. "I admitted I was shrewd, Hillas, but I'm not yellow clear through, not enough to betray this part of the frontier anyhow. I had a man along here last fall spying for minerals. That's why I'm out here now. If you know the location, and we both think you do, I'll put capital in your way to develop the mines and use what pull I have to get the road in."

He looked down at the boy and thrust out a masterful jaw. There was a ring of sincerity no one could mistake when he spoke again.

"This country's a desert now, but I'd back the Sahara peopled with your kind. This is on the square, Hillas, don't tell me you won't believe I'm—American enough to trust?"

The boy tried to speak. With stiffened body and clenched hands he struggled for self-control. Finally

in a ragged whisper, "If I try to tell you what—it means —I can't talk! Dan and I know of outcropping coal over in the Buttes." He nodded in the direction of the Missouri, "but we haven't had enough money to file mining claims."

"Know where to dig for samples under this snow?"

The boy nodded. "Some in my shack too. I——" His head went down upon the crossed arms. Smith laid an awkward hand on the heaving shoulders, then rose and crossed the room to where the girl had stumbled in her vigil. Gently he touched the darkened streak where her shoulders had rubbed and blurred the newspaper print. He looked from the relentless white desert outside to the gay bravery within and bent his head. "Turkey-red—calico!"

There was the sound of jingling harness and the crunch of runners. The men bundled into fur coats.

"Hillas, the draw right by the house here," Smith stopped and looked sharply at the plainsman, then went on with firm carelessness, "This draw ought to strike a low grade that would come out near the river level. Does Dan know Clark's address?" Hillas nodded.

They tiptoed out and closed the door behind them softly. The wind had swept every cloud from the sky and the light of the northern stars etched a dazzling world. Dan was checking up the leaders as Hillas caught him by the shoulder and shook him like a clumsy bear.

"Dan, you blind old mole, can you see the headlight of the Overland Freight blazing and thundering down that draw over the Great Missouri and Eastern?"

Dan stared.

"I knew you couldn't!" Hillas thumped him with furry fist. "Dan," the wind might easily have drowned the unsteady voice, "I've told Mr. Smith about the coal —for freight. He's going to help us get capital for mining and after that the road."

"Smith! Smith! Well, I'll be—aren't you a claim spotter?"

He turned abruptly and crunched toward the stage. His passengers followed. Dan paused with his foot

on the runner and looked steadily at the traveller from under lowered, shaggy brows.

"You're going to get a road out here?"

"I've told Hillas I'll put money in your way to mine the coal. Then the railroad will come."

Dan's voice rasped with tension. "We'll get out the coal. Are you going to see that the road is built?"

Unconsciously the traveller held up his right hand. "I am!"

Dan searched his face sharply. Smith nodded. "I'm making my bet on the people—friend!"

It was a new Dan who lifted his bronzed face to a white world. His voice was low and very gentle. "To bring a road here," he swung his whip-handle from Donovan's light around to Carson's square, sweeping in all that lay behind, "out here to them——" The pioneer faced the wide desert that reached into a misty space ablaze with stars, "would be like—playing God!"

The whip thudded softly into the socket and Dan rolled up on the driver's seat. Two men climbed in behind him. The long lash swung out over the leaders as Dan headed the old mail-sled across the drifted right-of-way of the Great Missouri and Eastern.

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD

By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

From *Saturday Evening Post*

I WAS before one of those difficult positions unavoidable to a man of letters. My visitor must have some answer. He had come back for the manuscript of his memoir and for my opinion. It was the twilight of an early Washington winter. The lights in the great library, softened with delicate shades, had been turned on. Outside, Sheridan Circle was almost a thing of beauty in its vague outline; even the squat ridiculous bronze horse had a certain dignity in the blue shadow.

If one had been speculating on the man, from his physical aspect one would have taken Walker for an engineer of some sort, rather than the head of the United States Secret Service. His lean face and his angular manner gave that impression. Even now, motionless in the big chair beyond the table, he seemed—how shall I say it?—mechanical.

And that was the very defect in his memoir. He had cut the great cases into a dry recital. There was no longer in them any pressure of a human impulse. The glow of inspired detail had been dissected out. Everything startling and wonderful had been devitalized.

The memoir was a report.

The bulky typewritten manuscript lay on the table beside the electric lamp, and I stood about uncertain how to tell him.

"Walker," I said, "did nothing wonderful ever happen to you in the adventure of these cases?"

"What precisely do you mean?" he replied.

The practical nature of the man tempted me to extravagance.

"Well," I said, "for example, were you never kissed

in a lonely street by a mysterious woman and the flash of your dark lantern reveal a face of startling beauty?"

"No," he said, as though he were answering a sensible question, "that never happened to me."

"Then," I continued, "perhaps you have found a prince of the church, pale as alabaster, sitting in his red robe, who put together the indicatory evidence of the crime that baffled you with such uncanny acumen that you stood aghast at his perspicacity?"

"No," he said; and then his face lighted. "But I'll tell you what I did find. I found a drunken hobo at Atlantic City who was the best detective I ever saw."

I sat down and tapped the manuscript with my fingers.

"It's not here," I said. "Why did you leave it out?"

He took a big gold watch out of his pocket and turned it about in his hand. The case was covered with an inscription.

"Well," he said, "the boys in the department think a good deal of me. I shouldn't like them to know how a dirty tramp faked me at Atlantic City. I don't mind telling you, but I couldn't print it in a memoir."

He went directly ahead with the story and I was careful not to interrupt him:

"I was sitting in a rolling chair out there on the Boardwalk before the Traymore. I was nearly all in, and I had taken a run to Atlantic for a day or two of the sea air. The fact is the whole department was down and out. You may remember what we were up against; it finally got into the newspapers.

"The government plates of the Third Liberty Bond issue had disappeared. We knew how they had gotten out, and we thought we knew the man at the head of the thing. It was a Mulehaus job, as we figured it.

"It was too big a thing for a little crook. With the government plates they could print Liberty Bonds just as the Treasury would. And they could sow the world with them."

He paused and moved his gold-rimmed spectacles a little closer in on his nose.

"You see these war bonds are scattered all over the country. They are held by everybody. It's not what

it used to be, a banker's business that we could round up. Nobody could round up the holders of these bonds.

"A big crook like Mulehaus could slip a hundred million of them into the country and never raise a ripple."

He paused and drew his fingers across his bony protruding chin.

"I'll say this for Mulehaus: He's the hardest man to identify in the whole kingdom of crooks. Scotland Yard, the Service de la Sûreté, everybody, says that. I don't mean dime-novel disguises—false whiskers and a limp. I mean the ability to be the character he pretends—the thing that used to make Joe Jefferson Rip Van Winkle—and not an actor made up to look like it. That's the reason nobody could keep track of Mulehaus, especially in South American cities. He was a French banker in the Egypt business and a Swiss banker in the Argentine."

He turned back from the digression:

"And it was a clean job. They had got away with the plates. We didn't have a clue. We thought, naturally, that they'd make for Mexico or some South American country to start their printing press. And we had the ports and the border netted up. Nothing could have gone out across the border or through any port. All the customs officers were working with us, and every agent of the Department of Justice."

He looked at me steadily across the table.

"You see the government had to get those plates back before the crook started to print, or else take up every bond of that issue over the whole country. It was a hell of a thing!

"Of course we had gone right after the record of all the big crooks to see whose line this sort of job was. And the thing narrowed down to Mulehaus or old Vronsky. We soon found out it wasn't Vronsky. He was in Joliet. It was Mulehaus. But we couldn't find him.

"We didn't even know that Mulehaus was in America. He's a big crook with a genius for selecting men. He might be directing the job from Rio or a Mexican port. But we were sure it was a Mulehaus job. He sold the

French securities in Egypt in '90; and he's the man who put the bogus Argentine bonds on our market—you'll find the case in the 115th Federal Reporter.

"Well," he went on, "I was sitting out there in the rolling chair, looking at the sun on the sea and thinking about the thing, when I noticed this hobo that I've been talking about. He was my chair attendant, but I hadn't looked at him before. He had moved round from behind me and was now leaning against the galvanized-pipe railing.

"He was a big human creature, a little stooped, unshaved and dirty; his mouth was slack and loose, and he had a big mobile nose that seemed to move about like a piece of soft rubber. He had hardly any clothing; a cap that must have been fished out of an ash barrel, no shirt whatever, merely an old ragged coat buttoned round him, a pair of canvas breeches and carpet slippers tied on to his feet with burlap, and wrapped round his ankles to conceal the fact that he wore no socks.

"As I looked at him he darted out, picked up the stump of a cigarette that someone had thrown down, and came back to the railing to smoke it, his loose mouth and his big soft nose moving like kneaded putty.

"Altogether this tramp was the worst human derelict I ever saw. And it occurred to me that this was the one place in the whole of America where any sort of a creature could get a kind of employment and no questions asked.

"Anything that could move and push a chair could get fifteen cents an hour from McDuyal. Wise man, poor man, beggar man, thief, it was all one to McDuyal. And the creatures could sleep in the shed behind the rolling chairs.

"I suppose an impulse to offer the man a garment of some sort moved me to address him. 'You're nearly naked,' I said.

"He crossed one leg over the other with the toe of the carpet slipper touching the walk, in the manner of a burlesque actor, took the cigarette out of his mouth with a little flourish, and replied to me: 'Sure, Governor, I ain't dolled up like John Drew.'

"There was a sort of cocky unconcern about the creature that gave his miserable state a kind of beggarly distinction. He was in among the very dregs of life, and he was not depressed about it.

"'But if I had a sawbuck,' he continued, 'I could bulge your eye. . . . Couldn't point the way to one?'

"He arrested my answer with the little flourish of his fingers holding the stump of the cigarette.

"'Not work, Governor,' and he made a little duck of his head, 'and not murder. . . . Go as far as you please between 'em.'

"The fantastic manner of the derelict was infectious.

"'O. K.,' I said. 'Go out and find me a man who is a deserter from the German Army, was a tanner in Bâle and began life as a sailor, and I'll double your money—I'll give you a twenty-dollar bill.'

"The creature whistled softly in two short staccato notes.

"'Some little order,' he said. And taking a toothpick out of his pocket he stuck it into the stump of the cigarette which had become too short to hold between his fingers.

"At this moment a boy from the postoffice came to me with the daily report from Washington, and I got out of the chair, tipped the creature, and went into the hotel, stopping to pay McDuyal as I passed.

"There was nothing new from the department except that our organization over the country was in close touch. We had offered five thousand dollars reward for the recovery of the plates, and the Postoffice Department was now posting the notice all over America in every office. The Secretary thought we had better let the public in on it and not keep it an underground offer to the service.

"I had forgotten the hobo, when about five o'clock he passed me a little below the Steel Pier. He was in a big stride and he had something clutched in his hand.

"He called to me as he hurried along: 'I got him, Governor. . . . See you later!'

"'See me now,' I said. 'What's the hurry?'

"He flashed his hand open, holding a silver dollar with his thumb against the palm.

"'Can't stop now, I'm going to get drunk. See you later.'

"I smiled at the disingenuous creature. He was saving me for the dry hour. He could point out Mulehaus in any passing chair, and I would give some coin to be rid of his pretension."

Walker paused. Then he went on:

"I was right. The hobo was waiting for me when I came out of the hotel the following morning.

"'Howdy, Governor,' he said; 'I located your man.'

"I was interested to see how he would frame up his case.

"'How did you find him?' I said.

"He grinned, moving his lip and his loose nose.

"'Some luck, Governor, and some sleuthin'. It was like this: I thought you was stringin' me. But I said to myself I'll keep out an eye; maybe it's on the level—any damn thing can happen.'

"He put up his hand as though to hook his thumb into the armhole of his vest, remembered that he had only a coat buttoned round him and dropped it.

"'And believe me or not, Governor, it's the God's truth. About four o'clock up toward the Inlet I passed a big, well-dressed, banker-looking gent walking stiff from the hip and throwing out his leg. "Come eleven!" I said to myself. "It's the goose-step!" I had an empty roller, and I took a turn over to him.

"'"Chair, Admiral?" I said.

"'He looked at me sort of queer.

"'"What makes you think I'm an admiral, my man?" he answers.

"'"Well," I says, lounging over on one foot reflective like, "nobody could be a-viewin' the sea with that lovin', ownership look unless he'd bossed her a bit. . . . If I'm right, Admiral, you takes the chair."

"'He laughed, but he got in. "I'm not an admiral," he said, "but it is true that I've followed the sea."'

"The hobo paused, and put up his first and second fingers spread like a V.

"'Two points, Governor—the gent had been a sailor and a soldier; now how about the tanner business?'

"He scratched his head, moving the ridiculous cap.

"'That sort of puzzled me, and I pussyfooted along toward the Inlet thinkin' about it. If a man was a tanner, and especially a foreign, hand-workin' tanner, what would his markin's be?

"'I tried to remember everybody that I'd ever seen handlin' a hide, and all at once I recollected that the first thing a dago shoemaker done when he picked up a piece of leather was to smooth it out with his thumbs. An' I said to myself, now that'll be what a tanner does, only he does it more . . . he's always doin' it. Then I asks myself what would be the markin's?'

"The hobo paused, his mouth open, his head twisted to one side. Then he jerked up as under a released spring.

"'And right away, Governor, I got the answer to it —flat thumbs!'

"The hobo stepped back with an air of victory and flashed his hand up.

"'And he had 'em! I asked him what time it was so I could keep the hour straight for McDuyal, I told him, but the real reason was so I could see his hands."

Walker crossed one leg over the other.

"It was clever," he said, "and I hesitated to shatter it. But the question had to come.

"'Where is your man?' I said.

"The hobo executed a little deprecatory step, with his fingers picking at his coat pockets.

"'That's the trouble, Governor,' he answered; 'I intended to sleuth him for you, but he give me a dollar and I got drunk . . . you saw me. That man had got out at McDuyal's place not five minutes before. I was flashin' to the booze can when you tried to stop me. . . . Nothin' doin' when I get the price.'"

Walker paused.

"It was a good fairy story and worth something. I offered him half a dollar. Then I got a surprise.

"The creature looked eagerly at the coin in my fingers, and he moved toward it. He was crazy for the liquor it would buy. But he set his teeth and pulled up.

"'No, Governor,' he said, 'I'm in it for the sawbuck. Where'll I find you about noon?'

"I promised to be on the Boardwalk before Heinz's Pier at two o'clock, and he turned to shuffle away. I called an inquiry after him. . . . You see there were two things in his story: How did he get a dollar tip, and how did he happen to make his imaginary man banker-looking? Mulehaus had been banker-looking in both the Egypt and the Argentine affairs. I left the latter point suspended, as we say. But I asked about the dollar. He came back at once.

"'I forgot about that, Governor,' he said. 'It was like this: The admiral kept looking out at the sea where an old freighter was going South. You know, the fruit line to New York. One of them goes by every day or two. And I kept pushing him along. Finally we got up to the Inlet, and I was about to turn when he stopped me. You know the neck of ground out beyond where the street cars loop; there's an old board fence by the road, then sand to the sea, and about halfway between the fence and the water there's a shed with some junk in it. You've seen it. They made the old America out there and the shed was a tool house.

"'When I stopped the admiral says: "Cut across to the hole in that old board fence and see if an automobile has been there, and I'll give you a dollar." An' I done it, an' I got it.'

"Then he shuffled off.

"'Be on the spot, Governor, an' I'll lead him to you.'"

Walker leaned over, rested his elbows on the arms of his chair, and linked his fingers together.

"That gave me a new flash on the creature. He was a slicker article than I imagined. I was not to get off with a tip. He was taking some pains to touch me for a greenback. I thought I saw his line. It would not account for his hitting the description of Mulehaus in the make-up of his straw man, but it would furnish the data for the dollar story. I had drawn the latter a little before he was ready. It belonged in what he planned to give me at two o'clock. But I thought I saw what the creature was about. And I was right."

Walker put out his hand and moved the pages of his memoir on the table. Then he went on:

"I was smoking a cigar on a bench at the entrance to Heinz's Pier when the hobo shuffled up. He came down one of the streets from Pacific Avenue, and the direction confirmed me in my theory. It also confirmed me in the opinion that I was all kinds of a fool to let this dirty hobo get a further chance at me.

"I was not in a very good humour. Everything I had set going after Mulehaus was marking time. The only report was progress in linking things up; not only along the Canadian and Mexican borders and the custom houses, but we had also done a further unusual thing, we had an agent on every ship going out of America to follow through to the foreign port and look out for anything picked up on the way.

"It was a plan I had set at immediately the robbery was discovered. It would cut out the trick of reshipping at sea from some fishing craft or small boat. The reports were encouraging enough in that respect. We had the whole country as tight as a drum. But it was slender comfort when the Treasury was raising the devil for the plates and we hadn't a clue to them."

Walker stopped a moment. Then he went on:

"I felt like kicking the hobo when he got to me, he was so obviously the extreme of all worthless creatures, with that apologetic, confidential manner which seems to be an abominable attendant on human degeneracy. One may put up with it for a little while, but it presently becomes intolerable.

"'Governor,' he began, when he shuffled up, 'you won't get mad if I say a little somethin'?'

"'Go on and say it,' I said.

"The expression on his dirty unshaved face became, if possible, more foolish.

"'Well, then, Governor, askin' your pardon, you ain't Mr. Henry P. Johnson, from Erie; you're the Chief of the United States Secret Service, from Washington.'"

Walker moved in his chair.

"That made me ugly," he went on, "the assurance of the creature and my unspeakable carelessness in per-

mitting the official letters brought to me on the day before by the postoffice messenger to be seen. In my relaxation I had forgotten the eye of the chair attendant. I took the cigar out of my teeth and looked at him.

"'And I'll say a little something myself!' I could hardly keep my foot clear of him. 'When you got sober this morning and remembered who I was, you took a turn up round the postoffice to make sure of it, and while you were in there you saw the notice of the reward for the stolen bond plates. That gave you the notion with which you pieced out your fairy story about how you got the dollar tip. Having discovered my identity through a piece of damned carelessness on my part, and having seen the postal notice of the reward, you undertook to enlarge your little game. That's the reason you wouldn't take fifty cents. It was your notion in the beginning to make a touch for a tip. And it would have worked. But now you can't get a damned cent out of me.' Then I threw a little brush into him: 'I'd have stood a touch for your finding the fake tanner, because there isn't any such person.'

"I intended to put the hobo out of business," Walker went on, "but the effect of my words on him were even more startling than I anticipated. His jaw dropped and he looked at me in astonishment.

"'No such person!' he repeated. 'Why, Governor, before God, I found a man like that, an' he was a banker—one of the big ones, sure as there's a hell!'"

Walker put out his hands in a puzzled gesture.

"There it was again, the description of Mulehaus! And it puzzled me up. Every motion of this hobo's mind in every direction about this affair was perfectly clear to me. I saw his intention in every turn of it and just where he got the material for the details of his story. But this absolutely distinguishing description of Mulehaus was beyond me. Everybody, of course, knew that we were looking for the lost plates, for there was the reward offered by the Treasury; but no human soul outside of the trusted agents of the department knew that we were looking for Mulehaus."

Walker did not move, but he stopped in his recital for a moment.

"The tramp shuffled up a step closer to the bench where I sat. The anxiety in his big slack face was sincere beyond question.

"'I can't find the banker man, Governor; he's skipped the coop. But I believe I can find what he's hid.'

"'Well,' I said, 'go on and find it.'

"The hobo jerked out his limp hands in a sort of hopeless gesture.

"'Now, Governor,' he whimpered, 'what good would it do me to find them plates?'

"'You'd get five thousand dollars,' I said.

"'I'd git kicked into the discard by the first cop that got to me,' he answered, 'that's what I'd git.'

"The creature's dirty, unshaved jowls began to shake, and his voice became wholly a whimper.

"'I've got a line on this thing, Governor, sure as there's a hell. That banker man was viewin' the layout. I've thought it all over, an' this is the way it would be. They're afraid of the border an' they're afraid of the custom houses, so they runs the loot down here in an automobile, hides it up about the Inlet, and plans to go out with it to one of them fruit steamers passing on the way to Tampico. They'd have them plates bundled up in a sailor's chest most like.

"'Now, Governor, you'd say why ain't they already done it; an' I'd answer, the main guy—this banker man—didn't know the automobile had got here until he sent me to look, and there ain't been no ship along since then. . . . I've been special careful to find that out.' And then the creature began to whine. 'Have a heart, Governor, come along with me. Gimme a show!'

"It was not the creature's plea that moved me, nor his pretended deductions; I'm a bit old to be soft. It was the 'banker man' sticking like a bur in the hobo's talk. I wanted to keep him in right until I understood where he got it. No doubt that seems a slight reason for going out to the Inlet with the creature; but you must remember that slight things are often big sign boards in our business."

He continued, his voice precise and even:

"We went directly from the end of the Boardwalk to the old shed; it was open, an unfastened door on a pair of leather hinges. The shed is small, about twenty feet by eleven, with a hard dirt floor packed down by the workmen who had used it, a combination of clay and sand like the Jersey roads put in to make a floor. All round it, from the sea to the board fence, was soft sand. There were some pieces of old junk lying about in the shed; but nothing of value or it would have been nailed up.

"The hobo led right off with his deductions. There was the track of a man, clearly outlined in the soft sand, leading from the board fence to the shed and returning, and no other track anywhere about.

"'Now, Governor,' he began, when he had taken a look at the tracks, 'the man that made them tracks carried something into this shed, and he left it here, and it was something heavy.'

"I was fairly certain that the hobo had salted the place for me, made the tracks himself; but I played out a line to him.

"'How do you know that?' I said.

"'Well, Governor,' he answered, 'take a look at them two line of tracks. In the one comin' to the shed the man was walkin' with his feet apart and in the one goin' back he was walkin' with his feet in front of one another; that's because he was carryin' somethin' heavy when he come an' nothin' when he left.'

"It was an observation on footprints," he went on, "that had never occurred to me. The hobo saw my awakened interest, and he added:

"'Did you never notice a man carryin' a heavy load? He kind of totters, walkin' with his feet apart to keep his balance. That makes his foot tracks side by side like, instead of one before the other as he makes them when he's goin' light.'"

Walker interrupted his narrative with a comment:

"It's the truth. I've verified it a thousand times since that hobo put me onto it. A line running through the center of the heel prints of a man carrying a heavy

burden will be a zigzag, while one through the heel prints of the same man without the burden will be almost straight.

"The tramp went right on with his deductions:

"'If it come in and didn't go out, it's here.'

"And he began to go over the inside of the shed. He searched it like a man searching a box for a jewel. He moved the pieces of old castings and he literally fingered the shed from end to end. He would have found a bird's egg.

"Finally he stopped and stood with hand spread out over his mouth. And I selected this critical moment to touch the powder off under his game.

"'Suppose,' I said, 'that this man with the heavy load wished to mislead us; suppose that instead of bringing something here he took one of these old castings away?'

"The hobo looked at me without changing his position.

"'How could he, Governor; he was pointin' this way with the load?'

"'By walking backward,' I said. For it had occurred to me that perhaps the creature had manufactured this evidence for the occasion, and I wished to test the theory."

Walker went on in his slow, even voice:

"The test produced more action than I expected. The hobo dived out through the door. I followed to see him disappear. But he was not in flight; he was squatting down over the foot prints. And a moment later he rocked back on his haunches with a little exultant yelp.

"'Dope's wrong, Governor,' he said; 'he was sure comin' this way.' Then he explained: 'If a man's walkin' forward in sand or mud or snow the toe of his shoe flirts out a little of it, an' if he's walkin' backward his heel flirts it out.'

"At this point I began to have some respect for the creature's ability. He got up and came back into the shed. And there he stood, in his old position, with his fingers over his mouth, looking round at the empty shed.

in which, as I have said, one could not have concealed a bird's egg.

"I watched him without offering any suggestion, for my interest in the thing had awakened and I was curious to see what he would do. He stood perfectly motionless for about a minute; and then suddenly he snapped his fingers and the light came into his face.

"'I got it, Governor!' Then he came over to where I stood. 'Gimme a quarter to get a bucket.'

"I gave him the coin, for I was now profoundly puzzled, and he went out. He was gone perhaps twenty minutes, and when he came in he had a bucket of water. But he had evidently been thinking on the way, for he set the bucket down carefully, wiped his hands on his canvas breeches, and began to speak, with a little apologetic whimper in his voice.

"'Now look here, Governor,' he said, 'I'm a-goin' to talk turkey; do I get the five thousand if I find this stuff?'

"'Surely,' I answered him.

"'An' there'll be no monkey'n', Governor; you'll take me down to a bank yourself an' put the money in my hand?'

"'I promise you that,' I assured him.

"But he was not entirely quiet in his mind about it. He shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and his soft rubber nose worked.

"'Now, Governor,' he said, 'I'm leery about jokers—I gotta be. I don't want any string to this money. If I get it I want to go and blow it in. I don't want you to hand me the roll an' then start any reformin' stunt —a-holdin' of it in trust an' a probation officer a-pussy-footin' me, or any funny business. I want the wad an' a clear road to the bright lights, with no word passed along to pinch me. Do I git it?'

"'It's a trade!' I said.

"'O. K.,' he answered, and he took up the bucket. He began at the door and poured the water carefully on the hard tramped earth. When the bucket was empty he brought another and another. Finally about midway of the floor space he stopped.

"'Here it is!' he said.

"I was following beside him, but I saw nothing to justify his words.

"'Why do you think the plates are buried here?' I said.

"'Look at the air bubbles comin' up, Governor,' he answered."

Walker stopped, then he added:

"It's a thing which I did not know until that moment, but it's the truth. If hard-packed earth is dug up and repacked air gets into it, and if one pours water on the place air bubbles will come up."

He did not go on, and I flung the big query of his story at him.

"And you found the plates there?"

"Yes," he replied, "in the false bottom of an old steamer trunk."

"And the hobo got the money?"

"Certainly," he answered. "I put it into his hand, and let him go with it, as I promised."

Again he was silent, and I turned toward him in astonishment.

"Then," I said, "why did you begin this story by saying the hobo faked you? I don't see the fake; he found the plates and he was entitled to the reward."

Walker put his hand into his pocket, took out a leather case, selected a paper from among its contents and handed it to me. "I didn't see the fake either," he said, "until I got this letter."

I unfolded the letter carefully. It was neatly written in a hand like copper plate and dated from Buenos Aires:

Dear Colonel Walker: When I discovered that you were planting an agent on every ship I had to abandon the plates and try for the reward. Thank you for the five thousand; it covered expenses. Very sincerely yours,

D. Mulehaus.

THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON

By THOMAS GRANT SPRINGER

From *Live Stories*

KAN WONG, the sampan boatman, sat in the bow of his tiny craft, looking with dream-misted eyes upon the oily, yellow flood of the Yangtze River. Far across on the opposite shore, blurred by the mist that the alchemy of the setting sun transmuted from miasmic vapour to a veil of gold, rose the purple-shadowed, stone-tumbled ruins of Hang Gow, ruins that had been a proud, walled city in the days before the Tai-ping Rebellion.

Viewing its slowly dimming powers as they sank into the fading gold of the mist that the coming night thickened and darkened as it wiped out the light with a damp hand, Kan Wong dreamed over the stories that his father's father—now revered dust somewhere off toward the hills that dimly met the melting sky line—had told him of that ruined city, wherein he, Kan Wong, had not Fate made men mad, would now be ruling a lordly household, even wearing the peacock feather and embroidered jacket that were his by right of the Dragon's blood, that blood now hidden under the sun-browned skin of a river coolie. Kan Wong stuffed fine-cut into his brass-bowled pipe and struck a spark from his tinder box. Through his wide nostrils twin streamers of smoke writhed out, twisting fantastically together and mixing slowly with the rising river mist. His pipe became a wand of dreams summoning the genii of glorious memory. The blood of the Dragon in his veins quickened from the lethargy to which drudgery had cooled it, and raced hotly as he thought of the battle past of his forefathers.

Off somewhere along the river's winding length, where

it crawled slowly to the sea, lay the great coast cities. The lazy ripples, light-tipped, beckoned with luring fingers. There was naught to stay him. His sampan was his home, and movable, therefore the morrow would see him turning its bow downstream to seek that strange city where, he had heard, dwelt many Foreign Devils who now and then scattered wealth with a prodigal hand.

In that pale hour when the mist, not yet dissipated by the rising sun, lay in a cold, silver veil upon the night-chilled water, he pushed out from the shore and pointed the sampan's prow downstream. Days it took him to reach salt water. He loitered for light cargoes at village edges, or picked up the price of his daily rice at odd tasks ashore, but always, were it day or night for travel, his tiny craft bore surely seaward. Mile after slow mile dropped behind him, like the praying beads of a lama's chain, but at last the river salted slightly, and his tiny craft was lifted by the slow swell of the sea's hand reaching for inland.

The river became more populous. The crowding sampans, houseboats, and junks stretched far out into its oily, oozy flow, making a floating city as he neared the congested life of the coast, where the ever-increasing population failed to find ground space in its maggoty swarming. As the stream widened until the farther bank disappeared in the artificial mist of rising smoke and man-stirred dust, the Foreign Devils' fire junks appeared, majestically steaming up and down—swift swans that scorned the logy, lumbering native craft, the mat sails and toiling sweeps of which made them appear motionless by comparison. A day or two of this and then the coast, with Shanghai sprawling upon the bank, writhing with life, odoriferous, noisy, perpetually awake.

Kang Wong slid into its waterfront turmoil, an infinitesimal human atom added to it. His tiny craft fixed itself upon the outer edge of the wriggling river life like a coral cell attaching itself to a slow growing atoll. From there he worked his way inshore, crawling over the craft that stretched out from the low banks as a water beetle might move over the flotsam and jetsam caught

in the back-water of a sluggish stream. Once in the narrow, crowded streets of the city itself, he roamed aimlessly, open-eyed to its wonders, dreamily observant. Out of the native quarter and into the foreign section he moved, accustoming himself to these masters of mystery whom he was about to serve, calling sluggish memory to his aid as his ears strove to reconstruct the meaning of the barbarous jargon.

Into the quarter where the Foreign Devils and the native population came together to barter and to trade, he strayed one day. A Foreign Devil in a strangely unattractive uniform was addressing a crowd of coolies in their own tongue. Kan Wong attached himself to the outer edge of the impassively curious throng, his ears alert, his features, as ever, an imperturbable mask. The foreign officer, for such he seemed to be, was making an offer to the assemblage for contract labour: one dollar a day, with rice, fish, and tea rations, for work in a foreign land. Kan Wong translated the money quickly into *yens*. The sum seemed incredible to him. What service would he not perform for such payment? Why, within a year, or two at the very most, with careful frugality, he might return and buy himself a junk worthy of his Dragon dreams of the river. And then . . .

The officer talked on, persuading, holding out the glittering lure of profit and adventure. Kan Wong listened eagerly. He had thought there was a ban on contract labour, but perhaps this new Republican Government, so friendly to the Foreign Devil, had removed it. Surely one who wore the uniform of a soldier and an officer could not thus publicly solicit coolies without the sanction of the mandarins, or escape their notice.

Kan Wong studied the crowd. It contained a few Chinese soldiers, who were obviously keeping order. He was satisfied, and edged his way closer to the speaker. There, already, ranged to one side was a line of his own kind, jabbering to a Celestial who put down their names on slips of rice paper and accepted their marks, which they made with a bamboo brush, that they bonded themselves to the adventure. Kan Wong gained the

signing table. Picking up the brush, he set his name, the name of one of the Dragon's blood, to the contract, accepted a duplicate, and stepped back into the waiting line.

His pay and his rations, he was told, would begin two days hence, when he was to report to the fire junk now lying at the dock, awaiting the human cargo of which he was a part. Kan Wong memorized the directions as he turned away from his instructing countryman. Of the Foreign Devil he took no further notice. Time enough for that when he passed into service. The God of Luck had smiled upon his boldness, and, reflecting upon it, Kan Wong turned back to the river and the sampan that had so long been his floating home. No sentimental memories, however, clung about it for him. Its freight of dreams he had landed here in Shanghai, marketing them for a realization. The sampan now was but the empty shell of a water beetle, that had crawled upon the bank into the sun of Fortune to spill forth a dragon fly to try newly found wings of adventure.

He found a customer, and, with much haggling after the manner of his kind, disposed of his boat, the last tie, if tie there was, that bound him to his present life. Waterman he had always been, and now had come to him the call of the Father of All Waters. The tang of the salt in his nostrils conjured up dreams as magical as those invoked by the wand of the poppy god. Wrapped in their rosy mantle, he walked the streets for the next two days, and on the third he took his way to the dock where lay the fire junk that was to bear him forth into the wonders of the Foreign Devils' land. Larger she loomed than any he had ever seen, larger, oh, much larger, than those which had steamed up the Yangtze in swanlike majesty. But this huge bulk was grey—grey and squat and powerful. Once aboard, he found it crowded with an army of chattering coolies. They swarmed in the hold like maggots. Every inch of space was given over to them, an army, it seemed to Kan Wong, in which he was all but lost.

Day after day across the waste of water the ship took its eastern way. Never had Kan Wong dreamed

there was so much water in the world. The broad, long river that had been his life's path seemed but a narrow trickle on the earth's face compared with this stretch of sea that never ended, though the days ran into weeks. The land coolies chafed and found much sickness in the swell, but Kan Wong, used ever to a moving deck, found the way none too long, and smiled softly to himself as he counted up the dollars they were paying him for the keenest pleasure he had ever known.

At last land appeared. The ship swung into the dock, disclosing to the questioning eyes of Kan Wong and his kind a new strange land. In orderly discipline they were marched off the vessel and on to the dock. But rest was not theirs as yet, nor was this their final destination. From the fire junk they boarded the flying iron horse of the Foreign Devils; again they were on the move. Swiftly across the land they went, over high mountains crowded with eternal snow, thence down upon brown, rolling plains as wide as the flat stretches of the broad Yangtze Valley; eastward, ever eastward, through a land sparsely peopled for all its virgin fertility. Behind their flying progress the days dropped—one, two, three, four, at last five; and then they entered a more populous region. Kan Wong, his nose flattened against the glass that held the moving picture as in a frame, wondered much at the magic that unrolled to his never-sated eyes. Yet the journey's end was beyond his questioning.

Once more they came to a seaport. Marching from the carriages, once more they beheld the sea. But this time it was different—more turbulent, harsher, more sombre with the hint of waiting storms. Was there, then, more than one ocean, Kan Wong asked himself? He found that it was indeed so when once more a fire junk received them. This one was greyer than the first that they had known. Upon her decks were guns and at her side were other junks, low, menacing, with a demon flurry of vicious speed, and short, squat funnels that belched dense smoke clouds. Within the town were many Foreign Devils, all dressed alike in strange drab uniforms; on the docks and here and there at other places

they bore arms and other unmistakable equipment of fighting men, which even Kan Wong could not but notice.

The grey ship moved out into a cold grey fog. With it were other ships as grey and as crowded, ships that crawled with men, strange Foreign Devils who clanked with weapons as they walked aboard. Again a waste of water, through which the ship seemed to crawl with a caution that Kan Wong felt, but did not understand. With it, on either side, moved those other junks—squat, menacing, standing low on the horizon, but as haunting as dark ghosts. Where were they bound, this strangely mixed fleet? Often Kan Wong pondered this, but gave it no tongue to his fellow-passengers, holding a bit aloof from them by virtue of his caste.

Again they neared the shore, where other boats, low-built and bristling with guns, flew swiftly out to meet them like fierce ocean birds of prey. Now they skirted high, bleak cliffs, their feet hid in a lather of white foam; then they rounded the cliffs and passed into a storm-struck stretch of sea through which they rolled to a more level land, off which they cast anchor. The long ocean journey was finished at last.

There was a frantic bustle at this port, increasing a hundredfold when once they set foot upon the land. Men—men were everywhere; men in various uniforms, men who spoke various tongues in a confusing babel, yet they all seemed intent upon one purpose, the import of which Kan Wong could but vaguely guess. All about them was endless movement, but no confusion, and once ashore their work commenced immediately.

From the fleet of fire junks various cargoes were to be unloaded with all speed, and at this the coolies toiled. Numberless crates, boxes, and bags came ashore to be stowed away in long, low buildings, or loaded into long lines of rough, boxlike carriages that then went scurrying off behind countless snorting and puffing fire-horses to the east, always to the east and north. Strange engines, which the Foreign Devils saw to it that they handled most tenderly, were also much in evidence, and always, at all hours the uniformed men with their bristling arms and clanking equipment crowded into the car-

riages and were whisked off to the east, always to the east and north. They went with much strange shouting and, to Kan Wong's ears, discordant sounds that they mistook for music. Yet now and then other strings of carriages came back from the east and north, with other men—men broken, bloody, lacking limbs, groping in blindness, their faces twisted with pain as they were loaded into the waiting fire-junks to recross the rough sea.

Then came the turn of the coolies to be crowded into the boxlike carriages and to be whisked off to the east. With them went tools—picks, shovels, and the like—for further work, upon the nature of which Kan Wong, unquestioning, speculated. It was a slow, broken journey that they made. Every now and then they stopped that other traffic might pass them, going either way; mostly the strange men in uniforms, bristling with guns, hurrying always to the east and north.

At last they too turned north, and as they did so the country, which had been smiling, low, filled with soft fields and pretty, nestling houses, little towns and quiet, orderly cities, changed to bleak fields, cut and seared as by a simoom's angry breath. Still there were little towns—or what had been little towns, now tumbled ruins—fire-smitten, gutted, their windows gaping like blind eyes in the face of a twisted cripple. Off to the east hung angry clouds from which the thunder echoed distantly; a thunder low, grumbling, continual, menacing, and through the clouds at night were lightning flashes of an angry red. Toward this storm it seemed that all the men were hurrying, and so too were the coolies of whom Kan Wong was one. Often they chattered speculatively of the storm beyond. What did it mean? Why did the men hurry toward instead of away from it? Truly the ways of the Foreign Devils were strange!

As they drew nearer to the storm, the river dreams of Kan Wong returned. This was indeed the land of the Dragon's wrath. The torn and harrowed fields, the empty, broken towns, the distant, grumbling storm, and the armed men, hurrying, always hurrying, toward the east and north where the clouds darkened and spread

—all this was in the tales that his father's father had told him of those fifteen mad years when the Yangtze Valley crouched trembling under the fiery breath of the Dragon's wrath. Here once more he saw the crumbling towers and walls of Hang Gow in fresh ruin. Here was the ruthless wreck that even nature in her fiercest mood could never make. Truly the lure of the Dragon's blood in him was drawing him, magnet-like, to the glory of his ancestors.

The one who had them in charge and spoke their tongue gave them their tools and bade them dig narrow ditches, head deep. From them they ran tunnels into deep caves hollowed out far under the ground. They burrowed like moles, cutting galleries here and there, reinforcing them with timbers, and lining them with a stone which they made out of dust and water. Many they cut, stretching far back behind the ever-present storm in front of them, while from that storm cloud, in swift and unseen lightning bolts that roared and burst and destroyed their work often as fast as it was completed, fell death among them, who were only labourers, not soldiers, as Kan Wong now knew those Foreign Devils in the strange and dirty uniforms to be.

As the storm roared on, never ceasing, it stirred the Dragon's blood in Kan Wong's veins. The pick and shovel irked his hands as he swung them; his palms began to itch for the weapons that the soldiers bore. Now and then he came upon a gun where it had dropped from its owner's useless hands. He studied its mechanism, even asking the Foreign Devil overseer how it was worked, and, being shown, he remembered and practised its use whenever opportunity offered. He took to talking with his fellow-workers, some of whom had themselves fought with the rebels of New China, who, with just such Foreign Devils' tools, had clipped the claws of the Manchu Dragon, freeing the Celestial Kingdom forever from its crooked grip. He took much interest in these war implements. He became more intimate and friendly with his fellows, feeling them now to be brothers in a danger that had awakened the soldier soul beneath the brown of his coolie skin.

Little could he make of all the strife about him. All of which he was sure was that this was the Dragon's Field, and he, a Son of the Dragon, had been guided to it to fulfil a destiny his forefathers had begun in the Yangtze Valley when with the "Hairy Rebels" they had waged such war as this. The flying death all about him that now and then claimed toll of one of his own kind was but a part of it; but all the time he grew to hate his humble work and long for a part, a real part, in the fighting that raged ahead, where an unseen enemy, of whom he grew to think as his own, hurled destruction among them. Often he spoke of this to the gang under him, imbuing them with the spirit of the Dragon's blood that, eager to fulfil its destiny, once more boiled within him.

Then one day the storm grew more furious. The thunder was a continual roll, and both from the front and rear flew the whining lightning bolts, spewing out death and destruction. Many a coolie fell, his dust buried under the dust of this fierce foreign land, never to be returned and mixed with that of his own Flowery Kingdom. Now and then came "stink pots," filling the air with such foul vapours that men coughed out their lives in the putrid fumes. The breath of the Dragon, fresh from his awful mouth, was wrapped about them in hot wrath.

Past them the soldiers streamed, foul with fight, their hot guns spitting viciously back into the rolling, pungent grey fog that followed them malignantly. Confusion reigned, and in that confusion a perfect riot of death. On all sides the soldiers fell, blighted by the Dragon's breath. The coolies crouched in the heaped-up ruins of their newly dug ditches, knowing not which way to turn, bereft of leadership since the Foreign Devil who commanded them was gone, buried beneath a pile of earth where a giant cracker had fallen.

Suddenly Kan Wong noticed that there were no more soldiers save only those who lay writhing or in still, twisted heaps upon the harrowed ground. The coolie crowd huddled here alone, clutching their futile picks and shovels, grovelling in helpless panic. Disaster had

overtaken them. The Dragon was upon them, and they were unprotected. All about them in scattered heaps lay discarded equipment, guns, even the sharp-barking, death-spitting, tiny instrument that the soldiers handled so lovingly and so gently when it was not in action. But those who manned the weapons had passed on, back through the thick curtain of smoke that hung between them and the comparative safety of the rear.

Kan Wong's eyes were ahead, striving to pierce the pungent veil that hid the enemy. Suddenly his keen eyes noted them—the strange uniforms and stranger faces, ducking forward here and there through the hell of their own making. The blood of the Dragon within him boiled up, now that the enemy was really near enough to feel the teeth and claws of the Dragon's whelps. This was the hour for which he had lived. This was the Tai-ping glory come again for him to share. Reaching down, he picked up the rifle of a fallen soldier, fondled its mechanism lovingly for a moment, and then, cuddling it tenderly beneath his chin, his finger bade it spit death at the misty grey figures crawling through the greyer fog in front.

When the magazine was exhausted he filled it with fresh clips and turned with the authority he had always wielded, and a new one that they instantly recognized, upon his shivering countrymen.

"What are ye?" he yelled with withering scorn. "Sons of pigs who root in the dung of this Foreign Devil's land, or men of the Dragon's blood? Are ye the scum of the Yangtze River or honourable descendants of the Hairy Rebels? Would ye avenge your brothers who have choked to death in the breath of the stink-pots that have been flung among us? Will ye let escape this horde of Foreign Devil enemies who have hurled at us giant crackers that have spit death, now that they are near enough to feel how the Dragon's blood can strike? Here are the Dragon's claws!" He waved his bayoneted gun aloft. "Will ye die like men, or like slinking rats stamped into the earth? All who are not cowards—come!" He waved the way through the smoke to the grey figures emerging from it.

The Chinaman is no coward when once aroused. Death he faces as he faces life, stoically, imperturbably. The coolies, reaching for the nearest weapons, followed the man who showed the Dragon's blood. Many of them understood the use of arms, having borne them for New China. Death was upon them, and they went to meet it with death in their hands.

Kan Wong dragged up an uninjured machine gun, the crew of which lay about it. Fitting the bands of cartridges as he had seen the gunners do, he turned the crank and swung it round on its revolving tripod. Before its vicious rain he saw the grey figures fall, and a great joy welled up in his breast. He signalled for other belts and worked the gun faster. Round him the coolies rallied; others beyond the sound of his voice joined in from pure instinct. The grey figures wavered, hesitated, melted back into the smoke, and then strove to work around the fire of the death-spitting group. But the Dragon's blood was up, the voice of the Dragon's son cheered and directed the snarling, roused whelps to whom war was an old, old trade, forgotten, and now remembered in this strange, wild land. The joy of slaughter came savagely upon them. The death that they had received they now gave back. In the place the white men had fled, the yellow men now stood, descendants of the Tai-pings, as fierce and wild as their once Hairy brothers.

Meanwhile, behind them the retreating line halted, stiffened by hurried reinforcements. The officers rallied their men, paused and looked back through the smoke. The line had given way and they must meet the oncoming wave. Quickly reforming, they picked their ground for a stand and waited. The moments passed, but no sign of the victors.

"What the hell is up?" snarled one of the reinforcing officers. "I thought the line had given way."

"It has," replied the panting, battle-torn commander. "My men are all back here; there's no one in front but the enemy!"

"What's that ahead, then?" The sharp bark of rifles, the *rat-a-tat* of machine guns, the boom of bursting

grenades, and the yells, groans, screams and shouts of the hand-to-hand conflict came through the curtaining smoke in a mad jumble of savage sound.

"Damned if I know! We'd better find out!" They began moving their now rallied men back into it.

Suddenly they came upon it—a writhing mass of jeans-clad coolies, wild-eyed, their teeth bared in devilish, savage grins, their hands busy with the implements of death, standing doggedly at bay before grey waves that broke upon them as a sullen sea breaks and recedes before a jutting point of land.

With the reinforcements the tide turned, ebbing back in a struggling, writhing fury, and soon the ground was clear again of all save the wreck that such a wave leaves behind it. Once the line was re-established and the soldiers holding it steadily, the coolies, once more the wielders of pick and shovel, returned to the work of trench repairing, leaving the fighting to those to whom it belonged.

The officers were puzzled. What had started them? What had injected that mad fighting spirit into their yellow hides? What had caused them to make that swift, wild, wonderful stand?

"Hey, you, John!" The commanding officer addressed one of them when a lull came and they were busy again at the tumbled earth. "What you fight for, hey?"

The coolie grinned foolishly.

"Him say fight. Him heap big man, alle same have Dlagon's blood. Him say fight, we fight, *sabe?*" And he pointed to Kan Wong—Kan Wong, his head bleeding from a wound, his eyes glowing with a green fury from between their narrow lids, his long, strong hands, red with blood other than his own, still clutching his rifle with a grip that had a tenderly savage joy in it.

The officer approached him.

"Are you the man who rallied the coolies and held the line?" he asked shortly.

Kan Wong stiffened with a dignity to which he now felt he had a right.

"Me fight," he said quietly—"me fight, coolie fight,

too. Me belong Dlagon's blood. One time my people fighting men; long time I wait."

"You'll wait no longer," said the officer. He unpinned the cross from his tunic and fastened it to the torn, bloody blouse of Kan Wong. "Off to the east are men of your own race, fighting-men from China, Cochin-China. That is the place for a man of the Dragon's blood—and that is the tool that belongs in your hand till we're done with this mess." He pointed to the rifle that Kan Wong still held with a stiff, loving, lingering grip.

And so, on the other side of the world, the Son of the Dragon came to his own and realized the dreams of a glory he had missed.

"HUMORESQUE"

By FANNIE HURST

From *Cosmopolitan*

ON either side of the Bowery, which cuts through like a drain to catch its sewage, Every Man's Land, a reeking march of humanity and humidity, steams with the excrement of seventeen languages, flung in *patois* from tenement windows, fire-escapes, curbs, stoops, and cellars whose walls are terrible and spongy with fungi.

By that impregnable chemistry of race whereby the red blood of the Mongolian and the red blood of the Caucasian become as oil and water in the mingling, Mulberry Street, bounded by sixteen languages, runs its intact Latin length of push-carts, clothes-lines, naked babies, drying vermicelli; black-eyed women in rhinestone combs and perennially big with child; whole families of button-hole makers, who first saw the blue-and-gold light of Sorrento, bent at home work around a single gas flare: pomaded barbers of a thousand Neapolitan amours. And then, just as suddenly, almost without osmosis and by the mere stepping-down from the curb, Mulberry becomes Mott Street, hung in grill-work balconies, the mouldy smell of poverty touched up with incense. Orientals, whose feet shuffle and whose faces are carved out of satinwood. Forbidden women, their white, drugged faces behind upper windows. Yellow children, incongruous enough in Western clothing. A drafty areaway with an oblique of gaslight and a black well of descending staircase. Show-windows of jade and tea and Chinese porcelains.

More streets emanating out from Mott like a handful of crooked, rheumatic fingers, then suddenly the Bowery again, cowering beneath elevated trains, where men, burned down to the butt end of soiled lives, pass in and

out and out and in of the knee-high swinging doors—a veiny-nosed, acid-eaten race in themselves.

Allen Street, too, still more easterly and half as wide, is straddled its entire width by the steely, long-legged skeleton of elevated traffic, so that its third-floor windows no sooner shudder into silence from the rushing shock of one train than they are shaken into chatter by the passage of another. Indeed, third-floor dwellers of Allen Street, reaching out, can almost touch the serrated edges of the elevated structure, and in summer the smell of its hot rails becomes an actual taste in the mouth. Passengers, in turn, look in upon this horizontal of life as they whiz by. Once, in fact, the blurry figure of what might have been a woman leaned out as she passed to toss into one Abrahm Kantor's apartment a short-stemmed pink carnation. It hit softly on little Leon Kantor's crib, brushing him fragrantly across the mouth and causing him to pucker up.

Beneath, where, even in August noonday, the sun cannot find its way by a chink, and babies lie stark naked in the cavernous shade, Allen Street presents a sort of submarine and greenish gloom, as if its humanity were actually moving through a sea of aqueous shadows, faces rather bleached and shrunk from sunlessness as water can bleach and shrink. And then, like a shimmering background of orange-finned and copper-flanked marine life, the brass shops of Allen Street, whole rows of them, burn flamelessly and without benefit of fuel.

To enter Abrahm Kantor's—Brasses—was three steps down, so that his casement show-window, at best filmed over with the constant rain of dust ground down from the rails above, was obscure enough, but crammed with the copied loot of khedive and of czar. The seven-branch candlestick so Biblical and supplicating of arms. An urn, shaped like Rebecca's, of brass all beaten over with little poks. Things: cups, trays, knockers, ikons, gargoyles, bowls, and teapots. A symphony of bells in graduated sizes. Jardinières with fat sides. A pot-bellied samovar. A swinging lamp for the dead, star-shaped. Against the door, an octave of tubular chimes, prisms of voiceless harmony and of heatless light.

Opening this door, they rang gently, like melody heard through water and behind glass. Another bell rang, too, in tilted singsong from a pulley operating somewhere in the catacomb rear of this lambent vale of things and things and things. In turn, this pulley set in toll still another bell, two flights up in Abrahm Kantor's tenement, which overlooked the front of whizzing rails and a rear wilderness of gibbet-looking clothes-lines, dangling perpetual specters of flapping union suits in a mid-air flaky with soot.

Often at lunch, or even the evening meal, this bell would ring in on Abrahm Kantor's digestive well-being, and while he hurried down, napkin often bib-fashion still about his neck, and into the smouldering lanes of copper, would leave an eloquent void at the head of his well-surrounded table.

This bell was ringing now, jingling in upon the slumber of a still newer Kantor, snuggling peacefully enough within the ammoniac depths of a cradle recently evacuated by Leon, heretofore impinged upon you.

On her knees before an oven that billowed forth hotly into her face, Mrs. Kantor, fairly fat and not yet forty, and at the immemorial task of plumbing a delicately swelling layer-cake with broom-straw, raised her face, reddened and faintly moist.

"Isadore, run down and say your papa is out until six. If it's a customer, remember the first asking-price is the two middle figures on the tag, and the last asking-price is the two outside figures. See once, with your papa out to buy your little brother his birthday present, and your mother in a cake, if you can't make a sale for first price."

Isadore Kantor, aged eleven and hunched with a younger Kantor over an oilcloth-covered table, hunched himself still deeper in barter for a large crystal marble with a candy stripe down its center.

"Izzie, did you hear me?"

"Yes'm."

"Go down this minute—do you hear? Rudolph, stop always letting your big brother get the best of you in marbles. Iz-zy!"

"In—a—minute."

"Don't let me have to ask you again, Isadore Kantor!"

"Aw, ma; I got some 'rithmetic to do. Let Esther go."

"Always Esther! Your sister stays right in the front room with her spelling."

"Aw, ma; I got spelling, too."

"Every time I ask that boy he should do me one thing, right away he gets lessons! With me, that lessons-talk don't go no more. Every time you get put down in school, I'm surprised there's a place left lower where they can put you. Working-papers for such a boy like you!"

"I'll woik——"

"How I worried myself! Violin lessons yet—thirty cents a lesson out of your papa's pants while he slept! That's how I wanted to have in the family a profession—maybe a musician on the violin. Lessons for you out of money I had to lie to your papa about! Honest, when I think of it—my own husband—it's a wonder I don't potch you just for remembering it. Rudolph, will you stop licking that cake-pan? It's saved for your little brother Leon. Ain't you ashamed even on your little brother's birthday to steal from him?"

"Ma, gimme the spoon?"

"I'll give you the spoon, Isadore Kantor, where you don't want it. If you don't hurry down the way that bell is ringing, not one bite out of your little brother's birthday-cake to-night!"

"I'm goin', ain't I?"

"Always on my children's birthdays a meanness sets into this house! Ru-dolph, will you put down that bowl? Iz-zy—for the last time I ask you—for the last time——"

Erect now, Mrs. Kantor lifted a portentous hand, letting it hover.

"I'm goin', ma; for golly sakes, I'm goin'!" said her recalcitrant one, shuffling off toward the staircase, shuffling, shuffling.

Then Mrs. Kantor resumed her plumbing, and through the little apartment, its middle and only bedroom of three beds and a crib lighted vicariously by the front

room and kitchen, began to wind the warm, the golden-brown fragrance of cake in the rising.

By six o'clock, the shades were drawn against the dirty dusk of Allen Street, and the oilcloth-covered table dragged out center and spread by Esther Kantor, nine in years, in the sturdy little legs bulging over shoe-tops, in the pink cheeks that sagged slightly of plumpness, and in the utter roundness of face and gaze, but mysteriously older in the little-mother lore of crib and knee-dandling ditties and in the ropy length and thickness of the two brown plaits down her back.

There was an eloquence to that waiting, laid-out table, the print of the family already gathered about it; the dynastic high chair, throne of each succeeding Kantor; an armchair drawn up before the paternal moustache-cup; the ordinary kitchen chair of Mannie Kantor, who spilled things, an oilcloth sort of bib dangling from its back; the little chair of Leon Kantor, cushioned in an old family album that raised his chin above the table. Even in cutlery, the Kantor family was not lacking in variety. Surrounding a centerpiece of thick Russian lace were Russian spoons washed in washed-off gilt, forks of one, two, and three tines. Steel knives with black handles. A hart's-horn carving-knife. Thick-lipped china in stacks before the armchair. A round four-pound-loaf of black bread waiting to be torn, and to-night, on the festive mat of cotton lace, a cake of pinkly gleaming icing, encircled with five pink little twisted candles.

At slightly after six, Abrahm Kantor returned, leading by a resisting wrist Leon Kantor, his stemlike little legs, hit midship, as it were, by not sufficiently cut-down trousers and so narrow and birdlike of face that his eyes quite obliterated the remaining map of his features, like those of a still wet nestling. All except his ears. They poised at the sides of Leon's shaved head of black bristles, as if butterflies had just lighted there, whispering, with very spread wings, their message, and presently would fly off again. By some sort of muscular contraction, he could wiggle these ears at will, and would do so for a penny, a whistle, and upon one occasion for his brother

Rudolph's dead rat, so devised as to dangle from string and window before the unhappy passer-by. They were quivering now, these ears, but because the entire little face was twitching back tears and gulp of sobs.

"Abrahm—Leon—what is it?" Her hands and her forearms instantly out from the business of kneading something meaty and floury, Mrs. Kantor rushed forward, her glance quick from one to the other of them. "Abrahm, what's wrong?"

"I'll feedle him! I'll feedle him!"

The little pulling wrist still in clutch, Mr. Kantor regarded his wife, the lower half of his face, well covered with reddish bristles, undershot, his free hand and even his eyes violently lifted. To those who see in a man a perpetual kinship to that animal kingdom of which he is supreme, there was something undeniably anthropoidal about Abrahm Kantor, a certain simian width between the eyes and long, rather agile hands with hairy backs.

"Hush it!" cried Mr. Kantor, his free hand raised in threat of descent and cowering his small son to still more undersized proportions. "Hush it, or, by golly, I'll——"

"Abrahm—Abrahm—what is it?"

Then Mr. Kantor gave vent in acridity of word and feature.

.."*Schlemmil!*" he cried. "*Momser! Ganef! Nebich!*" By which Abrahm Kantor, in smiting mother tongue, branded his offspring with attributes of apostate and ne'er-do-well, of idiot and thief.

"Abrahm!"

"*Schlemmil!*" repeated Mr. Abrahm, swinging Leon so that he described a large semi-circle that landed him into the meaty and waiting embrace of his mother. "Take him! You should be proud of such a little *Momser* for a son! Take him—and here you got back his birthday dollar. A feedle! Honest—when I think on it—a feedle!"

Such a rush of outrage seemed fairly to strangle Mr. Kantor that he stood, hand still upraised, choking and inarticulate above the now frankly howling huddle of his son.

"Abrahm, you should just once touch this child! How he trembles! Leon—mamma's baby—what is it—is this how you come back when papa takes you out to buy your birthday present? Ain't you ashamed?"

Mouth distended to a large and blackly hollow O, Leon, between terrifying spells of breath-holding, continued to howl.

"All the way to Naftel's toy store I drag him. A birthday present for a dollar his mother wants he should have—all right, a birthday present! I give you my word till I'm ashamed for Naftel, every toy on his shelves is pulled down. Such a cow—that shakes with his head——"

"No—no—no!" This from young Leon, beating at his mother's skirts.

Again the upraised but never quite descending hand of his father.

"By golly, I'll 'no—no' you!"

"Abrahm—go way! Baby, what did papa do?"

Then Mr. Kantor broke into an actual tarantella of rage, his hands palms up and dancing.

"'What did papa do?' she asks. She's got easy asking. 'What did papa do?' The whole shop, I tell you. A sheep with a baa inside when you squeeze on him—games—a horn so he can holler my head off—such a knife like Izzy's with a scissors in it! 'Leon,' I said, ashamed for Naftel, 'that's a fine knife like Izzy's so you can cut up with.' 'All right then'—when I see how he hollers—'such a box full of soldiers to have war with.' 'Dollar seventy-five,' says Naftel. 'All right then,' I says—when I seen how he keeps hollering—'give you a dollar fifteen for 'em.' I should make myself small for fifteen cents more. 'Dollar fifteen,' I says—anything so he should shut up with his hollering for what he seen in the window."

"He seen something in the window he wanted, Abrahm?"

"Didn't I tell you? A feedle! A four-dollar feedle! A moosiker, so we should have another feedler in the family for some thirty-cents lessons."

"Abrahm—you mean—he—our Leon—wanted a violin?"

"'Wanted,' she says. I could potch him again this minute for how he wanted it! *Du*—you little bum you—*Chammer—Momser*—I'll feedle you!"

Across Mrs. Kantor's face as she knelt there in the shapeless cotton-stuff uniform of poverty, through the very tenement of her body, a light had flashed up into her eyes. She drew her son closer, crushing his puny cheek up against hers, cupping his bristly little head in her by no means immaculate palms.

"He wanted a violin—it's come, Abrahm! The dream of all my life—it's come! I knew it must be one of my children if I waited long enough—and prayed enough. A musician! He wants a violin. He cried for a violin. My baby! Why, darlink, mamma'll sell her clothes off her back to get you a violin. He's a musician, Abrahm! I should have known it the way he's fooling always around the chimes and the bells in the store!"

Then Mrs. Kantor took to rocking his head between her palms.

"*Oi—oi!* The mother is crazier as her son. A moosican! A *Fresser* you mean. Such an eater, it's a wonder he ain't twice too big instead of twice too little for his age."

"That's a sign, Abrahm; they all eat big. For all we know he's a genius. I swear to you, Abrahm, all the months before he was born, I prayed for it. Each one before they came, I prayed it should be the one. I thought that time the way our Isadore ran after the organ-grinder he would be the one. How could I know it was the monkey he wanted? When Isadore wouldn't take it, I prayed my next one and then my next one should have the talent. I've prayed for it, Abrahm. If he wants a violin, please, he should have it."

"Not with my money."

"With mine! I've got enough saved, Abrahm. Them three extra dollars right here inside my own waist, that I saved toward that cape down on Grand Street. I wouldn't have it now the way they say the wind blows up them——"

"I tell you the woman's crazy!"

"I feel it! I know he's got talent! I know my children so well. A—a father don't understand. I'm so next to them. It's like I can tell always everything that will happen to them—it's like a pain—somewheres here—in back of my heart."

"A pain in the heart she gets!"

"For my own children I'm always a prophet, I tell you. You think I didn't know that—that terrible night after the pogrom after we got out of Kief to cross the border! You remember, Abrahm, how I predicted it to you then—how our Mannie would be born too soon and—and not right from my suffering? Did it happen on the ship to America just the way I said it would? Did it happen just exactly how I predicted our Izzy would break his leg that time playing on the fire-escape? I tell you, Abrahm, I get a real pain here under my heart that tells me what comes to my childrn. Didn't I tell you how Esther would be the first in her confirmation-class and our baby Boris would be red-headed? At only five years, our Leon all by himself cries for a fiddle—get it for him, Abrahm—get it for him!"

"I tell you, Sarah, I got a crazy woman for a wife! It ain't enough we celebrate eight birthdays a year with one-dollar presents each time and copper goods every day higher. It ain't enough that right to-morrow I got a fifty-dollar note over me from Sol Ginsberg—a four-dollar present she wants for a child that don't even know the name of a feedle!"

"Leon baby, stop hollering—papa will go back and get the fiddle for you now before supper. See—mamma's got money here in her waist——"

"Papa will go back for the feedle not—three dollars she's saved for herself he can holler out of her for a feedle!"

"Abrahm, he's screaming so he—he'll have a fit."

"He should have two fits."

"Darlink——"

"I tell you the way you spoil your children it will some day come back on us."

"It's his birthday night, Abrahm—five years since his little head first lay on the pillow next to me."

"All right—all right—drive me crazy because he's got a birthday."

"Leon baby—if you don't stop hollering you'll make yourself sick. Abrahm, I never saw him like this—he's green——"

"I'll green him. Where is that old feedle from Isadore—that seventy-five-cents one?"

"I never thought of that! You broke it that time you got mad at Isadore's lessons. I'll run down. Maybe it's with the junk behind the store. I never thought of that fiddle, Leon darlink—wait—mamma'll run down and look—wait, Leon, till mamma finds you a fiddle."

The raucous screams stopped then suddenly, and on their very lustiest crest, leaving an echoing gash across silence. On willing feet of haste, Mrs. Kantor wound down backward the high, ladderlike staircase that led to the brass shop.

Meanwhile, to a gnawing consciousness of dinner-hour, had assembled the house of Kantor. Attuned to the intimate atmosphere of the tenement which is so constantly rent with cry of child, child-bearing, delirium, delirium-tremens, Leon Kantor had howled no impression into the motley din of things. Isadore, already astride his chair, well into center-table, for first vociferous tear at the four-pound loaf; Esther Kantor, old at chores, settled an infant into the high chair, careful of tiny fingers in lowering the wooden bib.

"Papa, Izzy's eating first again."

"Put down that loaf and wait until your mother dishes up or you'll get a potch you won't soon forget."

"Say, pop——"

"Don't 'say pop' me! I don't want no street-bum freshness from you!"

"I mean, papa, there was an uptown swell in, and she bought one of them seventy-five-cent candlesticks for the first price."

"*Schlemmil—Chammer!*" said Mr. Kantor, rinsing his hands at the sink. "Didn't I always tell you it's the first price times two when you see up-town business come

in? Haven't I learned it to you often enough a slummer must pay for her nosiness?"

There entered then, on poor shuffling feet, Mannie Kantor, so marred in the mysterious and ceramic process of life that the brain and the soul had stayed back sooner than inhabit him. Seventeen in years, in the down upon his face, and in growth unretarded by any great nervosity of system, his vacuity of face was not that of childhood but rather as if his light eyes were peering out from some hinterland and wanting so terribly and so dumbly to communicate what they beheld to brain-cells closed against himself.

At sight of Mannie, Leon Kantor, the tears still wetly and dirtily down his cheeks, left off his black, fierce-eyed stare of waiting long enough to smile, darkly, it is true, but sweetly.

"Giddy-ap!" he cried. "Giddy-ap!"

And then Mannie, true to habit, would scamper and scamper.

Up out of the traplike stair-opening came the head of Mrs. Kantor, disheveled and a smudge of soot across her face, but beneath her arm, triumphant, a violin of one string and a broken back.

"See, Leon—what mamma got! A violin! A fiddle! Look—the bow, too, I found. It ain't much, baby, but it's a fiddle."

"Aw, ma—that's my old violin—gimme—I want it—where'd you find——"

"Hush up, Izzy! This ain't yours no more. See, Leon, what mamma brought you! A violin!"

"Now, you little *Chammer,* you got a feedle, and if you ever let me hear you holler again for a feedle, by golly if I don't——"

From his corner, Leon Kantor reached out, taking the instrument and fitting it beneath his chin, the bow immediately feeling, surely and lightly for string.

"Look, Abrahm! He knows how to hold it! What did I tell you? A child that never in his life seen a fiddle, except a beggar's on the street!"

Little Esther suddenly cantered down-floor, clapping her chubby hands.

"Looky—looky—Leon!"

The baby ceased clattering his spoon against the wooden bib. A silence seemed to shape itself.

So black and so bristly of head, his little clawlike hands hovering over the bow, Leon Kantor withdrew a note, strangely round and given up almost sobbingly from the single string. A note of warm twining quality, like a baby's finger.

"Leon—darlink!"

Fumbling for string and for notes the instrument could not yield up to him, the birdlike mouth began once more to open widely and terribly into the orificial O.

It was then Abrahm Kantor came down with a large hollow resonance of palm against the aperture, lifting his small son and depositing him plop upon the family album.

"Take that! By golly, one more whimper out of you and if I don't make you black-and-blue, birthday or no birthday! Dish up, Sarah, quick, or I'll give him something to cry about."

The five pink candles had been lighted, burning pointedly and with slender little smoke wisps. Regarding them owlishly, the tears dried on Leon's face, his little tongue licking up at them.

"Look how solemn he is, like he was thinking of something a million miles away except how lucky he is he should have a pink birthday-cake! Uh—uh—uh! Don't you begin to holler again— Here, I'm putting the feedle next to you—uh—uh—uh!"

To a meal plentifully ladled out directly from stove to table, the Kantor family drew up, dipping first into the rich black soup of the occasion. All except Mrs. Kantor.

"Esther, you dish up; I'm going somewhere. I'll be back in a minute."

"Where you going, Sarah? Won't it keep until——"

But even in the face of query, Sarah Kantor was two flights down and well through the lambent aisles of the copper shop. Outside, she broke into a run, through two blocks of the indescribable bazaar atmosphere of Grand Street, then one block to the right.

Before Naftel's show-window, a jet of bright gas burned into a jibberwock land of toys. There was that in Sarah Kantor's face that was actually lyrical, as, fumbling at the bosom of her dress, she entered.

To Leon Kantor, by who knows what symphonic scheme of things, life was a chromatic scale, yielding up to him through throbbing, living nerves of sheep-gut, the sheerest semitones of man's emotions.

When he tucked his Stradivarius beneath his chin, the Book of Life seemed suddenly translated to him in melody. Even Sarah Kantor, who still brewed for him, on a small portable stove carried from city to city and surreptitiously unpacked in hotel suites, the blackest of soups, and, despite his protestation, would incase his ears of nights in an old home-made device against their flightiness, would often times bleed inwardly at this sense of his isolation.

There was a realm into which he went alone, leaving her as detached as the merest ticket purchaser at the box-office.

At seventeen, Leon Kantor had played before the crowned heads of Europe, the aching heads of American capital, and even the shaved head of a South Sea prince. There was a layout of anecdotal gifts, from the molar tooth of the South Sea prince set in a South Sea pearl to a blue-enamelled snuff-box encrusted with the rearing-lion coat of arms of a very royal house.

At eighteen, came the purchase of a king's Stradivarius for a king's ransom, and acclaimed by Sunday supplements to repose of nights in an ivory cradle.

At nineteen, under careful auspices of press-agent, the ten singing digits of the son of Abrahm Kantor were insured at ten thousand dollars the finger.

At twenty, he had emerged surely and safely from the perilous quicksands which have sucked down whole Lilliputian worlds of infant prodigies.

At twenty-one, when Leon Kantor played a Sunday-night concert, there was a human queue curling entirely around the square block of the opera-house, waiting its

one, two, even three and four hours for the privilege of standing-room only.

Usually these were Leon Kantor's own people pouring up from the lowly lands of the East Side to the white lands of Broadway, parched for music, these burning brethren of his—old men in that line, frequently carrying their own little folding camp-chairs, not against weariness of the spirit but of the flesh; youth with Slavic eyes and cheek-bones. These were the six-deep human phalanx which would presently slant down at him from tiers of steepest balconies and stand frankly emotional and jammed in the unreserved space behind the railing which shut them off from the three-dollar seats of the reserved.

At a very special one of these concerts, dedicated to the meager purses of just these, and held in New York's super-opera-house, the Amphitheater, a great bowl of humanity, the metaphor made perfect by tiers of seats placed upon the stage, rose from orchestra to dome. A gigantic Colosseum of a cup, lined in stacks and stacks of faces. From the door of his dressing-room, leaning out, Leon Kantor could see a great segment of it, buzzing down into adjustment, orchestra twitting and tuning into it.

In a bare little room, illuminated by a sheaf of roses just arrived, Mrs. Kantor drew him back by the elbow.

"Leon, you're in a draft."

The amazing years had dealt kindly with Mrs. Kantor. Stouter, softer, apparently even taller, she was full of small new authorities that could shut out cranks, newspaper reporters, and autograph fiends. A fitted-over-corsets black taffeta and a high comb in the greying hair had done their best with her. Pride, too, had left its flush upon her cheeks, like two round spots of fever.

"Leon, it's thirty minutes till your first number. Close that door. Do you want to let your papa and his excitement in on you?"

The son of Sarah Kantor obeyed, leaning on his short, rather narrow form in silhouette against the closed door. In spite of slimly dark evening clothes worked out by an astute manager to the last detail in boyish effects, there was that about him which defied long-haired precedent.

Slimly and straightly he had shot up into an unmannered, a short, even a bristly-haired young manhood, disqualifying by a close shave for the older school of hirsute virtuosity.

But his nerves did not spare him. On concert nights they seemed to emerge almost to the surface of him and shriek their exposure.

"Just feel my hands, ma. Like ice."

She dived down into her large silk what-not of a reticule.

"I've got your fleece-lined gloves here, son."

"No—no. For God's—sake—not those things! No!"

He was back at the door again, opening it to a slit, peering through.

"They're bringing more seats on the stage. If they crowd me in I won't go on. I can't play if I hear them breathe. Hi—out there—no more chairs—pa—Hancock——"

"Leon, Leon, ain't you ashamed to get so worked up? Close that door. Have you got a manager who is paid just to see to your comfort? When papa comes, I'll have him go out and tell Hancock you don't want chairs so close to you. Leon, will you mind mamma and sit down?"

"It's a bigger house than the royal concert in Madrid, ma. Why, I never saw anything like it! It's a stampede. God, this is real—this is what gets me, playing for my own! I should have given a concert like this three years ago. I'll do it every year now. I'd rather play before them than all the crowned heads on earth. It's the biggest night of my life—they're rioting out there, ma—rioting to get in."

"Leon, Leon, won't you sit down if mamma begs you to?"

He sat then, strumming with all ten fingers upon his knees.

"Try to get quiet, son. Count—like you always do. One—two—three——"

"Please ma—for God's sake—please—please!"

"Look—such beautiful roses! From Sol Ginsberg, an old friend of papa's he used to buy brasses from

eighteen years ago. Six years he's been away with his daughter in Munich. Such a beautiful mezzo, they say, engaged already for Metropolitan next season."

"I hate it, ma, if they breathe on my neck."

"Leon darlink, did mamma promise to fix it? Have I ever let you plan a concert where you wouldn't be comfortable?"

His long, slim hands suddenly prehensile and cutting a long, upward gesture, Leon Kantor rose to his feet, face whitening.

"Do it now! Now, I tell you! I won't have them breathe on me. Do you hear me? Now! Now! Now!"

Risen also, her face soft and tremulous for him, Mrs. Kantor put out a gentle, a sedative hand upon his sleeve.

"Son," she said, with an edge of authority even behind her smile, "don't holler at me."

He grasped her hand with his two, and, immediately quiet, placed a close string of kisses along it.

"Mamma," he said, kissing them again and again into the palm, "mamma—mamma!"

"I know, son; it's nerves."

"They eat me, ma. Feel—I'm like ice. I didn't mean it; you know I didn't mean it."

"My baby," she said, "my wonderful boy, it's like I can never get used to the wonder of having you! The greatest one of them all should be mine—a plain woman's like mine!"

He teased her, eager to conciliate and ride down his own state of quivering.

"Now, ma—now—now—don't forget Rimsky!"

"'Rimsky!' A man three times your age who was playing concerts before you was born! Is that a comparison? From your clippings-books I can show Rimsky who the world considers the greatest violinist. Rimsky he rubs into me!"

"All right then, the press-clippings, but did Elsass, the greatest manager of them all, bring me a contract for thirty concerts at two thousand a concert? Now I've got you! Now!"

She would not meet his laughter.

"'Elsass!' Believe me, he'll come to you yet. My

boy should worry if he makes fifty thousand a year more or less. Rimsky should have that honour—for so long as he can hold it. But he won't hold it long. Believe me, I don't rest easy in my bed till Elsass comes after you. Not for so big a contract like Rimsky's, but bigger—not for thirty concerts but for fifty!"

"*Brava! Brava!* There's a woman for you. More money than she knows what to do with, and then not satisfied!"

She was still too tremulous for banter.

"'Not satisfied?' Why, Leon, I never stop praying my thanks for you!"

"All right then," he cried, laying his icy fingers on her cheek; "to-morrow we'll call a *Mignon*—a regular old-fashioned Allen Street prayer-party!"

"Leon, you mustn't make fun."

"Make fun of the sweetest girl in this room?"

"'Girl!' Ah, if I could only hold you by me this way, Leon! Always a boy—with me—your poor old mother—your only girl. That's a fear I suffer with, Leon—to lose you to a—girl! That's how selfish the mother of such a wonder-child like mine can get to be."

"All right. Trying to get me married off again. Nice! Fine!"

"Is it any wonder I suffer, son? Twenty-one years to have kept you by me a child. A boy that's never in his life was out after midnight except to catch trains. A boy that never has so much as looked at a girl and could have looked at princesses. To have kept you all these years—mine—is it any wonder, son, I never stop praying my thanks for you? You don't believe Hancock, son, the way he keeps teasing you always you should have a—what he calls—affair—a love-affair? Such talk is not nice, Leon—an affair!"

"Love-affair poppycock!" said Leon Kantor, lifting his mother's face and kissing her on eyes about ready to tear. "Why, I've got something, ma, right here in my heart for you that——"

"Leon, be careful your shirt-front!"

"That's so—so what you call 'tender,' for my best sweetheart that I—oh, love-affair—poppycock!"

She would not let her tears come.

"My boy—my wonder-boy!"

"There goes the overture, ma."

"Here, darlink—your glass of water."

"I can't stand it in here; I'm suffocating!"

"Got your mute in your pocket, son?"

"Yes, ma; for God's sake, yes! Yes! Don't keep asking things."

"Ain't you ashamed, Leon, to be in such an excitement? For every concert you get worse."

"The chairs—they'll breathe on my neck."

"Leon, did mamma promise you those chairs would be moved?"

"Where's Hancock?"

"Say—I'm grateful if he stays out. It took me enough work to get this room cleared. You know your papa he likes to drag in the whole world to show you off—always just before you play. The minute he walks in the room, right away he gets everybody to trembling just from his own excitements. I dare him this time he should bring people—no dignity has that man got, the way he brings everyone."

Even upon her words came a rattling of door, of door-knob and a voice through the clamour.

"Open—quick—Sarah! Leon!"

A stiffening raced over Mrs. Kantor, so that she sat rigid on her chair-edge, lips compressed, eye darkly upon the shivering door.

"Open—Sarah!"

With a narrowing glance, Mrs. Kantor laid to her lips a forefinger of silence.

"Sarah, it's me! Quick, I say!"

Then Leon Kantor sprang up, the old prehensile gesture of curving fingers shooting up.

"For God's sake, ma, let him in! I can't stand that infernal battering."

"Abrahm, go away! Leon's got to have quiet before his concert."

"Just a minute, Sarah. Open quick!"

With a spring, his son was at the door, unlocking and flinging it back.

"Come in, pa."

The years had weighed heavily upon Abrahm Kantor in avoirdupois only. He was himself plus eighteen years, fifty pounds, and a new sleek pomposity that was absolutely oleaginous. It shone roundly in his face, doubling of chin, in the bulge of waistcoat, heavily gold-chained, and in eyes that behind the gold-rimmed glasses gave sparklingly forth his estate of well-being.

"Abrahm, didn't I tell you not to dare to——"

On excited balls of feet that fairly bounced him, Abrahm Kantor burst in.

"Leon—mamma—I got out here an old friend—Sol Ginsberg—you remember, mamma, from brasses——"

"Abrahm—not now——"

"Go way with your 'not now!' I want Leon should meet him. Sol, this is him—a little grown-up from such a *Nebich* like you remember him—*nu?* Sarah, you remember Sol Ginsberg? Say—I should ask you if you remember your right hand? Ginsberg & Esel, the firm. This is his girl, a five years' contract signed yesterday—five hundred dollars an opera for a beginner—six rôles—not bad—*nu?*"

"Abrahm, you must ask Mr. Ginsberg please to excuse Leon until after his concert——"

"Shake hands with him, Ginsberg. He's had his hand shook enough in his life, and by kings, too—shake it once more with an old bouncer like you!"

Mr. Ginsberg, not unlike his colleague in rotundities, held out a short, a dimpled hand.

"It's a proud day," he said, "for me to shake the hands from mine old friend's son and the finest violinist living to-day. My little daughter——"

"Yes, yes, Gina. Here shake hands with him. Leon, they say a voice like a fountain. Gina Berg—eh, Ginsberg—is how you stage-named her? You hear, mamma, how fancy—Gina Berg? We go hear her, eh?"

There was about Miss Gina Berg, whose voice could soar to the tirra-lirra of a lark and then deepen to mezzo, something of the actual slimness of the poor, maligned Elsa so long buried beneath the buxomness of divas.

She was like a little flower that in its crannied nook keeps dewy longest.

"How do you do, Leon Kantor?"

There was a whir through her English of three acquired languages.

"How do *you* do?"

"We—father and I—travelled once all the way from Brussels to Dresden to hear you play. It was worth it. I shall never forget how you played the 'Humoresque.' It made me laugh and cry."

"You like Brussels?"

She laid her little hand to her heart, half closing her eyes.

"I will never be so happy again as with the sweet little people of Brussels."

"I, too, love Brussels. I studied there four years with Ahrenfest."

"I know you did. My teacher, Lyndahl, in Berlin, was his brother-in-law."

"You have studied with Lyndahl?"

"He is my master."

"I—will I sometime hear you sing?"

"I am not yet great. When I am foremost like you, yes."

"Gina—Gina Berg, that is a beautiful name to make famous."

"You see how it is done? Gins—Berg. Gina Berg."

"Clev-er!"

They stood then smiling across a chasm of the diffidence of youth, she fumbling at the great fur pelt out of which her face flowered so dewily.

"I—well—we—we are in the fourth box— I guess we had better be going—fourth box left." He wanted to find words, but for consciousness of self could not. "It's a wonderful house out there waiting for you, Leon Kantor, and you—you're wonderful, too!"

"The—flowers—thanks!"

"My father, he sent them. Come, father—quick!"

Suddenly there was a tight tensity that seemed to crowd up the little room.

"Abrahm—quick—get Hancock—that first rows of

chairs has got to be moved—there he is, in the wings—see the piano ain't dragged down too far! Leon, got your mute in your pocket? Please Mr. Ginsberg—you must excuse— Here, Leon, is your glass of water. Drink it, I say. Shut that door out there, boy, so there ain't a draft in the wings. Here, Leon, your violin. Got your neckerchief? Listen how they're shouting—it's for you—Leon—darlink—go!"

In the center of that vast human bowl which had finally shouted itself out, slim, boylike, and in his supreme isolation, Leon Kantor drew bow and a first thin, pellucid, and perfect note into a silence breathless to receive it.

Throughout the arduous flexuosities of the Mendelssohn E-minor concerto, singing, winding from tonal to tonal climax, and out of the slow movement, which is like a tourniquet twisting the heart into the spirited *allegro molto vivace,* it was as if beneath Leon Kantor's fingers the strings were living vein-cords, youth, vitality, and the very foam of exuberance racing through them.

That was the power of him—the Vichy and the sparkle of youth, so that, playing, the melody poured round him like wine and went down seething and singing into the hearts of his hearers.

Later, and because these were his people and because they were dark and Slavic with his Slavic darkness, he played, as if his very blood were weeping, the "Kol Nidre," which is the prayer of his race for atonement.

And then the super-amphitheater, filled with those whose emotions lie next to the surface and whose pores have not been closed over with a water-tight veneer, burst into its cheers and its tears.

There were fifteen recalls from the wings, Abrahm Kantor standing counting them off on his fingers, and trembling to receive the Stradivarius. Then, finally, and against the frantic negative pantomime of his manager, a scherzo, played so lacily that it swept the house in lightest laughter.

When Leon Kantor finally completed his program, they were loath to let him go, crowding down the aisles upon him, applauding up, down, round him, until the

great disheveled house was like the roaring of a sea, and he would laugh and throw out his arm in wide-spread helplessness, and always his manager in the background, gesticulating against too much of his precious product for the money, ushers already slamming up chairs, his father's arms out for the Stradivarius, and, deepest in the gloom of the wings, Sarah Kantor, in a rocker especially dragged out for her, and from the depths of the black-silk reticule, darning his socks.

"*Bravo—bravo!* Give us the 'Humoresque'—Chopin nocturne—polonaise—'Humoresque'! *Bravo—bravo!*"

And even as they stood, hatted and coated, importuning and pressing in upon him, and with a wisp of a smile to the fourth left box, Leon Kantor played them the "Humoresque" of Dvorak, skedaddling, plucking, quirking—that laugh on life with a tear behind it. Then suddenly, because he could escape no other way, rushed straight back for his dressing-room, bursting in upon a flood of family already there before him. Isadore Kantor, blue-shaven, aquiline, and already greying at the temples; his five-year-old son, Leon; a soft little pouter-pigeon of a wife, too, enormous of bust, in glittering ear-drops and a wrist-watch of diamonds half buried in chubby wrist; Miss Esther Kantor, pink and pretty; Rudolph; Boris, not yet done with growing-pains.

At the door, Miss Kantor met her brother, her eyes as sweetly moist as her kiss.

"Leon, darling, you surpassed even yourself!"

"Quit crowding, children! Let him sit down. Here, Leon, let mamma give you a fresh collar. Look how the child's perspired! Pull down that window, Boris. Rudolph, don't let no one in. I give you my word if to-night wasn't as near as I ever came to seeing a house go crazy. Not even that time in Milan, darlink—when they broke down the doors, was it like to-night——"

"Ought to seen, ma, the row of police outside——"

"Hush up, Roody! Don't you see your brother is trying to get his breath?"

From Mrs. Isadore Kantor: "You ought to seen the balconies, mother. Isadore and I went up just to see the jam."

"Six thousand dollars in the house to-night if there was a cent," said Isadore Kantor.

"Hand me my violin please, Esther. I must have scratched it, the way they pushed."

"No, son; you didn't. I've already rubbed it up. Sit quiet, darlink!"

He was limply white, as if the vitality had flowed out of him.

"God! Wasn't it—tremendous?"

"Six thousand if there was a cent," repeated Isadore Kantor; "more than Rimsky ever played to in his life!"

"Oh, Izzy, you make me sick, always counting—counting."

"Your sister's right, Isadore. You got nothing to complain of if there was only six hundred in the house. A boy whose fiddle has made already enough to set you up in such a fine business, his brother Boris in such a fine college, automobiles—style—and now because Vladimir Rimsky, three times his age, gets signed up with Elsass for a few thousand more a year, right away the family gets a long face——"

"Ma, please; Isadore didn't mean it that way!"

"Pa's knocking, ma; shall I let him in?"

"Let him in, Roody. I'd like to know what good it will do to try to keep him out."

In an actual rain of perspiration, his tie slid well under one ear, Abrahm Kantor burst in, mouthing the words before his acute state of strangulation would let them out.

"Elsass—it's Elsass outside—he—wants—to sign—Leon—fifty concerts—coast to coast—two thousand—next season—he's got the papers—already drawn up—the pen outside waiting——"

"Abrahm!"

"Pa!"

In the silence that followed, Isadore Kantor, a poppiness of stare and a violent redness set in, suddenly turned to his five-year-old son, sticky with lollypop, and came down soundly and with smack against the infantile, the slightly outstanding, and unsuspecting ear.

"*Momser!*" he cried. "*Chammer! Lump! Ganef!*

You hear that? Two thousand! Two thousand! Didn't I tell you—didn't I tell you to practise?"

Even as Leon Kantor put pen to this princely document, Francis Ferdinand of Austria, the assassin's bullet true, lay dead in state, and let slip were the dogs of war.

In the next years, men, forty deep, were to die in piles; hayricks of fields to become human hayricks of battlefields; Belgium disembowelled, her very entrails dragging to find all the civilized world her champion, and between the poppies of Flanders, crosses, thousands upon thousands of them, to mark the places where the youth of her allies fell, avenging outrage. Seas, even when calmest, were to become terrible, and men's heart-beats, a bit sluggish with the fatty degeneration of a sluggard peace, to quicken and then to throb with the rat-a-tat-tat, the rat-a-tat-tat of the most peremptory, the most reverberating call to arms in the history of the world.

In June, 1917, Leon Kantor, answering that rat-a-tat-tat, enlisted.

In November, honed by the interim of training to even a new leanness, and sailing orders heavy and light in his heart, Lieutenant Kantor, on two day's home-leave, took leave of his home, which can be cruelest when it is tenderest.

Standing there in the expensive, the formal, the enormous French parlour of his up-town apartment de luxe, from not one of whose chairs would his mother's feet touch floor, a wall of living flesh, mortared in blood, was throbbing and hedging him in.

He would pace up and down the long room, heavy with the faces of those who mourn, with a laugh too ready, too facetious in his fear for them.

"Well, well, what is this, anyway, a wake? Where's the coffin? Who's dead?"

His sister-in-law shot out her plump, watch-incrusted wrist.

"Don't, Leon" she cried. "Such talk is a sin! It might come true."

"Rosie-Posy-butter-ball," he said, pausing beside her chair to pinch her deeply soft cheek. "Cry-baby-roly-

poly, you can't shove me off in a wooden kimono that way."

From his place before the white-and-gold mantel, staring steadfastly at the floor-tiling, Isadore Kantor turned suddenly, a bit whiter and older at the temples.

"Don't get your comedy, Leon."

"'Wooden kimono'—Leon?"

"That's the way the fellows at camp joke about coffins, ma. I didn't mean anything but fun. Great Scott—can't anyone take a joke?"

"O God! O God!" His mother fell to swaying, softly hugging herself against shivering.

"Did you sign over power of attorney to pa, Leon?"

"All fixed, Izzy."

"I'm so afraid, son, you don't take with you enough money in your pockets. You know how you lose it. If only you would let mamma sew that little bag inside your uniform with a little place for bills and a little place for the asfitidy!"

"Now, please, ma—please! If I needed more, wouldn't I take it? Wouldn't I be a pretty joke among the fellows, tied up in that smelling stuff? Orders are orders, ma; I know what to take and what not to take."

"Please, Leon, don't get mad at me, but if you will let me put in your suitcase just one little box of that salve for your finger tips, so they don't crack——"

Pausing as he paced to lay cheek to her hair, he patted her.

"Three boxes if you want. Now, how's that?"

"And you won't take it out so soon as my back is turned?"

"Cross my heart."

His touch seemed to set her trembling again, all her illy concealed emotions rushing up.

"I can't stand it! Can't! Can't! Take my life—take my blood, but don't take my boy—don't take my boy——"

"Mamma, mamma, is that the way you're going to begin all over again after your promise?"

She clung to him, heaving against the rising storm of sobs.

"I can't help it—can't—cut out my heart from me, but let me keep my boy—my wonder-boy——"

"Oughtn't she be ashamed of herself? Just listen to her, Esther! What will we do with her? Talks like she had a guarantee I wasn't coming back. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if by spring I wasn't tuning up again for a coast-to-coast tour——"

"'Spring'—that talk don't fool me—without my boy, the springs in my life are over——"

"Why, ma, you talk like every soldier who goes to war was killed. There's only the smallest percentage of them die in battle——"

"'Spring,' he says; 'spring!' Crossing the seas from me! To live through months with that sea between us—my boy maybe shot—my——"

"Mamma, please!"

"I can't help it, Leon; I'm not one of those fine mothers that can be so brave. Cut out my heart, but leave my boy—my wonder-boy—my child I prayed for!"

"There's other mothers, ma, with sons."

"Yes, but not wonder-sons! A genius like you could so easy get excused, Leon. Give it up. Genius it should be the last to be sent to—the slaughter-pen. Leon darlink—don't go!"

"Ma, ma—you don't mean what you're saying. You wouldn't want me to reason that way. You wouldn't want me to hide behind my—violin."

"I would! Would! You should wait for the draft. With my Roody and even my baby Boris enlisted, ain't it enough for one mother? Since they got to be in camp, all right, I say, let them be there, if my heart breaks for it, but not my wonder-child! You get the exemption, Leon, right away for the asking. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go away! The people at home got to be kept happy with music. That's being a soldier, too, playing their troubles away. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go leave me—don't—don't——"

He suffered her to lie, tear-drenched, back into his arms, holding her close in his compassion for her, his own face twisting.

"God, ma, this—this is awful! Please—you make us

ashamed—all of us! I don't know what to say. Esther, come quiet her—for God's sake quiet her!"

From her place in that sobbing circle, Esther Kantor crossed to kneel beside her mother.

"Mamma, darling, you're killing yourself! What if every family went on this way? You want papa to come in and find us all crying? Is this the way you want Leon to spend his last hour with us——"

"O God—God!"

"I mean his last hour until he comes back, darling. Didn't you just hear him say, darling, it may be by spring?"

"'Spring'—'spring'—never no more springs for me——"

"Just think, darling, how proud we should be. Our Leon, who could so easily have been excused, not even to wait for the draft."

"It's not too late yet—please, Leon——"

"Our Roody and Boris both in camp, too, training to serve their country. Why, mamma, we ought to be crying for happiness! As Leon says, surely the Kantor family who fled out of Russia to escape massacre should know how terrible slavery can be. That's why we must help our boys, mamma, in their fight to make the world free. Right, Leon?"—trying to smile with her red-rimmed eyes.

"We've got no fight with no one! Not a child of mine was ever raised to so much as lift a finger against no one. We've got no fight with no one."

"We have got a fight with some one. With autocracy! Only, this time it happens to be Hunnish autocracy. You should know it, mamma; oh, you should know it deeper down in you than any of us, the fight our family right here has got with autocracy!"

"Leon's right, mamma darling, the way you and papa were beaten out of your country——"

"There's not a day in your life you don't curse it without knowing it! Every time we three boys look at your son and our brother Mannie, born an—an imbecile—because of autocracy, we know what we're fighting for. We know. You know, too. Look at him over

there, even before he was born, ruined by autocracy! Know what I'm fighting for? Why, this whole family knows! What's music, what's art, what's life itself in a world without freedom? Every time, ma, you get to thinking we've got a fight with no one, all you have to do is look at our poor Mannie. He's the answer! He's the answer!"

In a foaming sort of silence, Mannie Kantor smiled softly from his chair beneath the pink-and-gold shade of the piano-lamp. The heterogeneous sounds of women weeping had ceased. Straight in her chair, her great shelf of bust heaving, sat Rosa Kantor, suddenly dry of eye; Isadore Kantor head up. Erect now, and out from the embrace of her daughter, Sarah looked up at her son.

"What time do you leave, Leon?" she asked, actually firm of lip.

"Any minute, ma. Getting late."

This time she pulled her lips to a smile, waggling her forefinger.

"Don't let them little devils of French girls fall in love with my dude in his uniform."

Her pretense at pleasantry was almost more than he could bear.

"Hear! Hear! Our mother thinks I'm a regular lady-killer! Hear that, Esther?"—pinching her cheek.

"You are, Leon—only—only, you don't know it."

"Don't you bring down too many beaus while I'm gone, either, Miss Kantor!"

"I—won't, Leon."

Sotto voce to her: "Remember, Esther, while I'm gone, the royalties from the Discaphone records are yours. I want you to have them for pin-money and —maybe a dowry?"

She turned from him.

"Don't, Leon—don't——"

"I like him! Nice fellow, but too slow! Why, if I were in his shoes, I'd have popped long ago."

She smiled with her lashes dewy.

There entered then, in a violet-scented little whirl,

Miss Gina Berg, rosy with the sting of a winter's night, and, as usual, swathed in the high-napped furs.

"Gina!"

She was for greeting everyone, a wafted kiss to Mrs. Kantor, and then arms wide, a great bunch of violets in one outstretched hand, her glance straight sure and sparkling for Leon Kantor.

"Surprise—everybody—surprise!"

"Why, Gina—we read—we thought you were singing in Philadelphia to-night!"

"So did I, Esther darling, until a little bird whispered to me that Lieutenant Kantor was home on farewell leave."

He advanced to her down the great length of room, lowering his head over her hand, his puttee-clad legs clicked together.

"You mean, Miss Gina—Gina—you didn't sing?"

"Of course I didn't! Hasn't every prima donna a larynx to hide behind?" She lifted off her fur cap, spilling curls.

"Well, I—I'll be hanged!" said Lieutenant Kantor, his eyes lakes of her reflected loveliness.

She let her hand linger in his.

"Leon—you—really going—how—terrible—how—how—wonderful!"

"How wonderful—your coming!"

"I—you think it was not nice of me—to come?"

"I think it was the nicest thing that ever happened in the world."

"All the way here in the train, I kept saying—crazy—crazy—running to tell Leon—Lieutenant—Kantor good-bye—when you haven't even seen him three times in three years——"

"But each—each of those three times we—we've remembered, Gina."

"But that's how I feel toward all the boys, Leon—our fighting boys—just like flying to them to kiss them each one good-bye."

"Come over, Gina. You'll be a treat to our mother I—well, I'm hanged—all the way from Philadelphia!"

There was even a sparkle to talk then, and a let-up

of pressure. After a while, Sarah Kantor looked up at her son, tremulous but smiling.

"Well, son, you going to play—for your old mother before—you go? It'll be many a month—spring—maybe longer before I hear my boy again except on the discaphone."

He shot a quick glance to his sister.

"Why, I—I don't know. I—I'd love it, ma, if—if you think, Esther, I'd better."

"You don't need to be afraid of me, darlink. There's nothing can give me the strength to bear—what's before me like—like my boy's music. That's my life, his music."

"Why, yes; if mamma is sure she feels that way, play for us, Leon."

He was already at the instrument, where it lay swathed, atop the grand piano.

"What'll it be, folks?"

"Something to make ma laugh, Leon—something light, something funny."

"'Humoresque'?" he said, with a quick glance for Miss Berg.

"'Humoresque,'" she said, smiling back at him.

He capered through, cutting and playful of bow, the melody of Dvorak's, which is as ironic as a grinning mask.

Finished, he smiled at his parent, her face still untearful.

"How's that?"

"It's like life, son, that piece. Laughing and making fun of—the way just as we think we got—we ain't got."

"Play that new piece, Leon, the one you set to music. You know. The words by that young boy in the war who wrote such grand poetry before he was killed. The one that always makes poor Mannie laugh. Play it for him, Leon."

Her plump little unlined face innocent of fault, Mrs. Isadore Kantor ventured her request, her smile tired with tears.

"No, no—Rosa—not now—ma wouldn't want that."

"I do, son; I do! Even Mannie should have his share of good-bye."

To Gina Berg: "They want me to play that little setting of mine of Allan Seeger's poem, 'I have a rendezvous.'"

"It—it's beautiful, Leon! I was to have sung it on my program to-night—only, I'm afraid you had better not——"

"Please, Leon! Nothing you play can ever make me as sad as it makes me glad. Mannie should have too his good-bye."

"All right then, ma, if—if you're sure you want it. Will you sing it, Gina?"

She had risen.

"Why, yes, Leon."

She sang it then, quite purely, her hands clasped simply together and her glance mistily off, the beautiful, the heroic, the lyrical prophecy of a soldier-poet and a poet-soldier.

> But I've a rendezvous with Death
> On some scarred slope of battered hill,
> When spring comes round again this year
> And the first meadow-flowers appear.

In the silence that followed, a sob burst out stifled from Esther Kantor, this time her mother holding her in arms that were strong.

"That, Leon, is the most beautiful of all your compositions. What does it mean, son, that word, 'rondy-voo'?"

"Why, I—I don't exactly know. A rendezvous—it's a sort of meeting, an engagement, isn't it, Miss Gina? Gina?"

"That's it, Leon—an engagement."

"Have I an engagement with you, Gina?"

"Oh, how—how I hope you have, Leon!"

"When?"

"In the spring?"

"That's it—in the spring."

Then they smiled, these two, who had never felt more than the merest butterfly wings of love brushing them, light as lashes. No word between them, only an unfinished sweetness, waiting to be linked up.

Suddenly there burst in Abrahm Kantor.

"Quick, Leon! I got the car downstairs. Just fifteen minutes to make the ferry. Quick! The sooner we get him over there the sooner we get him back! I'm right, mamma? Now—now—no water-works! Get your brother's suitcase, Isadore. Now—now—no nonsense—quick!"

With a deftly manœuvred round of good-byes, a grip-laden dash for door, a throbbing moment of turning back when it seemed as though Sarah Kantor's arms could not unlock their deadlock of him, Leon Kantor was out and gone, the group of faces point-etched into the silence behind him. The poor mute face of Mannie, laughing softly. Rosa Kantor crying into her hands. Esther, grief-crumpled, but rich in the enormous hope of youth. The sweet Gina, to whom the waiting months had already begun their reality.

Not so, Sarah Kantor. In a bedroom adjoining, its high-ceilinged vastness as cold as a cathedral to her lowness of stature, sobs dry and terrible were rumbling up from her, only to dash against lips tightly restraining them.

On her knees beside a chest of drawers, and unwrapping it from swaddling-clothes, she withdrew what at best had been a sorry sort of fiddle. Cracked of back and solitary of string it was as if her trembling arms, raising it above her head, would make of themselves and her swaying body the tripod of an altar. The old twisting and prophetic pain was behind her heart. Like the painted billows of music that the old Italian masters loved to do, there wound and wreathed about her clouds of song.

> But I've a rendezvous with Death
> On some scarred slope of battered hill,
> When spring comes round again this year
> And the first meadow-flowers appear.

THE LUBBENY KISS

By LOUISE RICE

From *Ainslee's Magazine*

FOR many hours the hot July sun had beaten down upon the upland meadows and the pine woods of the lower New Jersey hills. So, when the dew began to fall, there arose from them a heady brew, distilled from blossoming milkweed and fruiting wild raspberry canes and mountain laurel and dried pine needles.

The Princess Dora Parse took this perfume into her lusty young lungs and blew it out again in a long sigh, after which she bent her first finger over her thumb as one must when one returns what all Romanys know to be "the breath of God." She did this almost unconsciously, for all her faculties were busied in another matter.

The eyes of a gorgio, weakened by an indoor life, would never have been able to distinguish the small object for which the princess looked, for she was perched up on the high seat of the red Romany *wardo,* and she drove her two strong, shaggy horses with a free and careless hand. But to Dora Parse the blur of vague shadows gliding by each wheel was not vague at all. Suddenly she checked her horses and sprang down.

The patteran for which she was looking was laid beneath a clump of the flowering weed which the Romanys call "stars in the sky." The gorgios know it as Queen Ann's lace, and the farmers curse it by the name of the wild carrot. The patteran was like a miniature log cabin without a roof, and across the top one large stick was laid, pointing upward along the mountain road.

Two brown and slender fingers on the big braid which dropped over her shoulder, the princess meditated, a shiver of fear running through her. What, she asked

herself, could this mean? Why, for the first time in years, were the wagons to go to the farm of Jan Jacobus? Even if it were only a chance happening, it was a most unfortunate one, for young Jan, the fair-haired, giant son of old Jacobus, with his light blue eyes and his drawling, insolent speech, was the last person in the world that she wanted to see, especially with her man near.

For she had meant no harm. Many and many a time she had smiled into the eyes of men and felt pride in her power over them. Still—and yet—— The princess scattered the patteran with her foot, for she knew that all the wagons must be ahead of her, since she had lagged so, and she leaped to her seat with one easy, lithe swing and drove on up the darkening road.

Jan Jacobus, like several other descendants of the Dutch settlers of New Jersey, held his upland farm on shares with John Lane's tribe of gypsies. Jacobus' and Bantas and Koppfs, they made no bones about having business dealings with the tribe of English Romanys which had followed a regular route, twice a year, from Maryland to the upper part of New Jersey, since before the beginning of the Revolutionary days. The descendants of the English settlers, the Hardys, the Lesters, the Vincents, and the Farrands, looked with still persisting English reserve upon the roamers of the woods and would have no traffic with them, though a good many of their sons and daughters had to know the few Romany young people who were left, by twos and threes in the towns for occasional years of schooling.

The tribe, trading in land in the two States which they frequented, and breeding horses, was very rich, but not very many people knew that. However, they were conceded to be shrewd bargainers, and when old John bought Martin Debbins' upland and rocky farm, one year, with the money that he had made by a lucky purchase of a gangling colt whose owner had failed rightly to appraise its possibilities as a racer, Boonton and Dover and Morristown laughed.

"*Sal* away," old John retorted pleasantly to the cashier of the bank in Boonton, where the tribe had deposited its surplus funds for many years, "but you won't *sal*

so much when you *dik* what I will make out of that joke."

The cashier thereupon looked thoughtful. It might well be that he and others would not laugh when they saw good fortune which might have been theirs following this genial old outlaw.

That summer the wagons camped on the Debbins place, and old John stocked it with a lot of fine hogs, for which the land was especially adapted. They fattened on the many acres, wooded with wild nut trees, and Jacobus—as keen a bargainer as any Romany, upon whom John Lane had had his eye all the time—took the farm on shares, and every year thereafter the cashier at the bank added a neat little total to the big balance which the tribe was rolling up.

And every year, as the wagons beat up toward Dover in July, old John would drive on ahead and spend a night of mingled business and pleasure with old Jan, reckoning up the profits on the Berkshires for which the farm was now famous, and putting down big mugs of the "black drink" for which Aunty Alice Lee, John Lane's ancient cousin, was equally famous. The amount of this fiery and head-splitting liquor which the two old men thus got away with was afterward gleefully recounted in the wagons and fearfully whispered of in the little Dutch church at Horse's Neck which the Jacobuses had attended for over a hundred years.

But never, as wagon after wagon had gone up the turning that led to the upward farm, had there been a patteran pointing that way. Always, it had shown the way onward and downward, to the little hamlet of Rockaway, where there was an old and friendly camping place, back of the blacksmith shop beyond the church. Old John never encouraged the wagons to visit any of the properties held by the tribe.

"Silver blackens the salt of friendship," he would say.

Dora Parse was driving her own *wardo*, a very fine one which had belonged to her mother. Lester Montague, of Sea Tack, Maryland, who makes the wagons of Romanys for all the Atlantic coast tribes, like his father before him, had done an especially good job of it. The

princess had been certified, by the Romany rites, to old John's eldest son, George, for she had flatly refused to be married according to the gorgio ways. Not having been married a full year, he was not yet entitled to carry the heavy, silver-topped stick which is the badge of the married man, nor could he demand a place in his wife's tent or wagon unless she expressly invited him. Dora Parse and George Lane were passionately in love with each other, and their meeting and mating had been the flowering romance of the tribe, the previous summer.

The princess, being descended from a very old Romany family, as her name showed, was far higher in rank than any one in the Lane tribe. Her aristocratic lineage showed in the set of her magnificent head, in the small, delicate fingers of her hand, and in the fire and richness of her eyes. Also, her skin was of the colour of old ivory upon which is cast a distant, faint reflection of the sunset, and her mouth, thinner than those of most Romanys, was of the colour of a ripe pomegranate.

"A *rauni*, a *puro rauni*," all the tribes of the eastern coast murmured respectfully, when Dora Parse's name was mentioned.

She was, indeed, a very great lady, but she was a flirtatious and headstrong girl. She was one of the few modern gypsies who still hold to the unadulterated worship of "those." All the members of John Lane's tribe were Methodists—had been since before they had migrated from England. In every wagon, save Dora's, a large illustrated Bible lay on a little table, and those who could, read them aloud to the rest of a Sunday afternoon. This did not mean, however, that the Romanys had descended to gorgio ways, or that they had wholly left off their attentions to "those." They combined the two. Old John was known as a fervent and eloquent leader in prayer at the Wednesday-night prayer meetings in the Maryland town where his church membership was held, but he had not ceased to carry the "box of meanings," as befitted the chief of the tribe.

This was a very beautifully worked box of pure gold, made by the great Nikola of Budapest, whose boxes can be found inside the shirt of every gypsy chief, where

they are always carried. In them are some grains of wheat, garnered by moonlight, a peacock's feather, and a small silver bell with a coiled snake for a handle. When anything is to be decided, a few of the grains are taken out and counted. If they are even, the omen is bad, but if they are odd, all is well. Old John had an elastic and accommodating mind, like all Romanys, so he never though it strange that he should ask the "box of meanings" whether or not it was going to storm on prayer-meeting nights.

Dora Parse thought of the box now, and wished that she might have the peacock's feather for a minute, so that her uneasy sense of impending bad luck would leave her. Then she stopped beside a cross-barred gate where an old man was evidently waiting for her.

"Lane was gettin' troubled about yuh," he said, as he turned the horses and peered curiously up at her. He knew who she was, not only because John Lane had said who it was who was late, but because Dora Parse's appearance was well known to the whole countryside. She was the only member of the tribe who kept to the full Romany dress. There were big gold loops in her small ears, and on her arms, many gold bracelets, whose lightness testified to their freedom from alloy. Her skirt was of red, heavily embroidered in blue, and her waist, with short sleeves, was of sheer white cloth, with an embroidered bolero. Her hair she wore in the ancient fashion, in two braids on either side of her face. She could well afford to, the chis muttered among themselves. Any girl with hair like that——

There was a long lane leading to the barns and to the meadow back of them, and there, said Jan, the tribe was to camp. As the princess drove along the short distance, she swiftly snatched off her little bolero, put it on wrong side out, and then snatched it off and righted it. That much, at least, she could do to avert ill luck. And her heart bounded as she drove in among the other wagons, for her husband came running to meet her and held out his arms.

She dropped into them and laid each finger tip, delicately, in succession, upon his eyes and his ears and

his mouth, the seal of a betrothal and the sign whereby a Romany chal may know that a chi intends to accept him when he speaks for her before the tribe; a sign that lovers repeat as a sacred and intimate caress. She leaned, hard, into his arms, and he held her, pressing the tender, confidential kiss that is given to children behind her little ear.

Dora Parse suddenly ran both hands through his thick hair and gave it a little pull. She always did that when her spirits rose. Then she turned and looked at the scene, and at once she knew that there was to be some special occasion. Aunty Alice Lee was seated by a cooking fire, on which stood the enormous iron pot in which the "big meals" were prepared, when the tribe was to eat together and not in separate groups, as it usually did. There were some boards laid on wooden horses, and Pyramus Lee, aunty's grandson, was bringing blocks of wood from the woodshed for seats. Dora Parse clapped her hands with delight and looked at her man.

"*Tetcho!*" she exclaimed, approvingly, using the word that spells all degrees of satisfaction. "And what is it for, stickless one? Is it a talk over silver?"

"Yes, it is some business," George Lane replied, "but first there will be a *gillie shoon*."

A *gillie shoon* has its counterpart in the English word "singsong," as it is beginning to be used now, with this exception: Romanies have few "fixed" songs. They have strains which are set, which every one knows, but a *gillie shoon* means that the performers improvise continually; and in this sense it is a mystic ceremony, never held at an appointed time, except a "time of Mul-cerus," which really means a sort of religious wave of feeling, which strikes tribe after tribe, usually in the spring.

"Marda has come back," Aunty Lee called out to Dora Parse. No one ever called her by her full name of Marda Lee, because she was a Lee only by courtesy, having been adopted from a distant wagon when both her parents were killed in a thunderstorm. Marda, wearing the trim tailored skirt and waist that were her usual costume, was putting the big red tablecloth of the "big

meals" on the boards. Dora went quickly toward the young girl and embraced her.

"How is our little scholar?" she asked affectionately.

"I am very well, Dora Parse, but a little tired," Marda answered.

"And did you receive another paper?"

"Yes. I passed my exams. It will save me half a year in Dover."

"That is good," Dora Parse replied, although she had only the dimmest idea of what Marda meant. The young girl knew that. She had just come from taking a special course in Columbia, and she was feeling the breach between herself and her people to be especially wide. Because of that, perhaps, she also felt more loving toward all of them than she ever had, and especially toward Dora, about whom she knew something that was most alarming. Dora Parse noted the pale, grave face of her favourite friend with concern.

"Smile, bird of my heart," she entreated, "for we are to have a *gillie shoon*. Sit near me, that I may follow your heaven voice."

There was no flattery meant. The Romanys call the soprano "the heaven voice," the tenor "the sky voice," the contralto "the earth voice," and the basso "the sea voice." Dora had a really wonderful earth voice, almost as wonderful as Marda's heaven voice, which would have been remarkable even among opera singers, and the two were known everywhere for their improvisations. In answer to the remark of the princess, Marda gave her a strange look and said:

"I shall be near you, Dora Parse. Do not forget."

Her manner was certainly peculiar, the princess thought, as she walked away. But then one never knew what Marda was thinking about. Her great education set her apart from others. Any chi who habitually read herself to sleep over those most *puro libros*, "The Works of William Shakespeare, in Eight Volumes, Complete, with Glossary and Appendix," must not be judged by ordinary standards. The princess knew the full title of those *puro libros*, having painfully spelled it out, all one rainy afternoon, in Marda's mother's wagon,

with repeated assistance and explanations from Marda, which had left the princess with a headache.

Now Aunty Lee took off the heavy iron cover of the pot and the odour of Romany duck stew, than which there is nothing in the world more appetizing, mingled with the sweet fragrance of the drying hay. Aunty thrust a fork as long as a poker into the bubbling mass and then gave the call that brings the tribe in a hurry.

"Empo!" she said in her shrill, cracked voice. "Empo! Empo!"

Laughing, teasing, jostling, talking, they all came, spilling out from the wagons, running from the barn, sauntering in, the lovers, by twos, and sat down before the plates heaped high with the duck and the vegetables with which it was cooked and the big loaves of Italian bread which the Romanys like and always buy as they pass through towns where there are Italian bakeries.

But they sat quiet then, and each one looked toward the princess, as politeness demanded, since she was the highest in rank among them.

She drew a sliver of meat from her plate and tossed it over her shoulder.

"To the great *ré*," she said.

"To the *shule*," each one murmured. Then, having paid their compliments to the sun and the moon, as all good Romanys must before eating, they fell to with heartiness.

When they were through, the mothers and the old men cleared away the tables and put the younger children to bed in the wagons, and the princess and George Lane and Marda and young Adam Lane, George's youngest brother, walked up and down, outside the glow from the cooking fire, taking the deep, full breaths which cleanse the mouth and prepare the soul for the ecstasy of song.

The men took away the table and the lanterns which had been standing about, and put out the cooking fire, for the big moon was rolling up over the treetops, and Romanys sing by her light alone, if they can. Frogs were calling in the shallow stretches of the Upper Rockaway. People began to sit down in a big circle.

Then Marda started the *gillie shoon*. At first you could not have been sure whether the sound was far or near, for she "covered" her tones, in a way that many a gorgio gives years and much silver to learn. Then the wonderful tone swelled out, as if an organ stop were being pulled open, and one by one, the four leaders cast in the dropping notes which followed and sustained the theme that Marda was weaving:

"Lal—la—ai—lala—lalu! Ai—l-a-a-a—lalu!"

Old John, who had not appeared before, slid into the circle, holding by the sleeve a giant of a man who seemed to come half unwillingly. Dora Parse saw him, and she could not repress the shiver that ran through her at the sight of young Jan Jacobus, yet she sang on. The deep, majestic basses throbbed out the foundation of the great, fuguelike chorus, and the sopranos soared and soared until they were singing falsetto, according to gorgio standards, only it sounded like the sweetly piercing high notes of violins, and the tenors and contraltos wove a garland of glancing melody between the two. They were all singing now. Rocking back and forth a little, swaying gently from side to side, lovers clasped together, mothers in their young sons' arms, and fathers clasping their daughters, they sent out to the velvet arch above them the heart cry of a race, proud and humble, cleanly voluptuous, strong and cruel, passionate and loving, elemental like the north wind and subtle as the fragrance of the poppy.

"Ai—lallu! Ai—lala—lala! Ai—lallu!"

Jan Jacobus sat with his big jaw dropping. Stupid boor that he was, he could not have explained the terrifying effect which this wild music and those tense, uplifting faces had upon him, but he would have given anything to be back in his mother's kitchen, with the lamp lit and the dark, unfamiliar night shut out.

As suddenly as the singing had begun, it stopped. People coughed, moved a little, whispered to one another. Then George Lane stood upon his feet, pulling Dora Parse with him.

"You see her?" he asked them all, holding out his wife in his arms.

Dora Parse knew then, for he was beginning the ritual of the man or woman who accuses a partner, before the tribe, of unfaithfulness. He was using the most *puro* Romany *jib*, for only so can the serious affairs of the tribe tribunal be conducted. Dora Parse struggled in the strong hands of her man.

"No! No!" she cried. "No—no!"

"You see her?" George Lane repeated to the circle.

"We see her," they answered in a murmur that ran around from end to end.

"She is mine?"

"She is yours."

"What shall be done to her if she has lost the spirit of our love?"

Again Dora Parse furiously struggled, but George Lane held her.

"What shall be done with her? If that is so?"

Aunty Lee, as the oldest woman present, now took up the replies, as was her right and duty:

"Let her go to that other, if she wishes, and do you close your tent and your wagon against her."

"And if she does not wish?"

"Then punish her."

"What shall be done to the man?"

"Is he a Romany?"

"No."

Jan Jacobus half started up, but strong hands instantly jerked him down.

"He is a gorgio?"

"Yes."

"Do nothing. We do not soil our hands with gorgios. Let the woman bear the blame. She is a Romany. She should have known better. She is a woman, the wiser sex. It is her fault. Let her be punished."

"Do you all say so?" George Lane demanded.

"We say so." Again the rippling murmur.

Jan Jacobus made a desperate attempt to get on his feet, but, for all his strength, he might as well have tried to uncoil the folds of a great snake as to unbind the many hands that held him, for the Romanys have

as many secret ways of restraining a person as the Japanese.

George Lane drew his wife tenderly close to him.

"She shall be punished," he said, "but first she shall hear, before you all, that I love her and that I know she has not lost the spirit of our love. Her fault was born of lightness of heart and vanity, not of evil."

"What is her fault? Name it," commanded Aunty Lee.

George Lane looked over at Jan.

"Her fault is that she trusted a gorgio to understand the ways of a Romany. For our girls have the spirit of love in their eyes, but no man among us would kiss a girl unless he received the sign from her. But the gorgio men are without honour. To-day, as this woman who is mine stopped to talk with a gorgio, among some trees where I waited, thinking to enter her wagon there, he kissed her, and she kissed him, in return."

"Not with the *lubbeny* kiss—not with that kiss!" Dora Parse cried. "May I be lost as Pharaoh was in the sea if I speak not the truth!"

The solemn oath, never taken by any Romany lightly and never falsely sworn to, rang out on the still night air. A cold, but firm little hand was slipped into Dora Parse's. Marda was near, as she had promised, and the hot palm of the princess closed gratefully upon it.

George Lane drew his wife upon his breast, and over her glossy head he looked for encouragement to Aunty Lee, who knew what he must do. He was very pale, but he must not hesitate.

"Kiss me, my love," he said, loudly and clearly, "here before my people, that I may punish you. Give me the kiss of love, when tongues and lips meet, that you may know your fault."

Now Dora Parse grew very pale, too, and she leaned far back against her man's arms, her eyes wide with terror. And no one spoke, for in all the history of the tribe this thing had never happened before, though every one had heard of it. Dora Parse knew that, if she refused, her oath would be considered false, and she would be cast out, not only from her husband's tent and wagon,

but from all Romany tribes. And slowly she leaned forward, and George Lane bent down.

Jan Jacobus, although he had not understood the words of the ritual, thought he knew what had happened. The gypsy fool was forgiving his pretty wife. The young Dutchman settled back on his haunches, suddenly aware that he was no longer held. And then, with all the others, he sprang to his feet, for Dora Parse was hanging in her husband's arms, with blood pouring from her mouth and George Lane was sobbing aloud as he called her name.

"What—what—what happened?" Jan stammered. "Gawd—did he kill her?"

Old John Lane, his serene face unruffled, turned the bewildered and frightened boy toward the lane and spoke, in the silky, incisive tones which were half of his enchanting charm.

"Nothing much has happened. One of our girls allowed a gorgio to kiss her, so her man bit off the tip of her tongue. It is not necessary, often, to do it, but it is not a serious matter. It will soon heal. She will be able to talk—a little. It is really nothing, but I thought you might like to see it. It is seldom that gorgios are allowed to see a thing like that.

"Please say to your father that I will spend the evening as usual with him. My people will pass on."

THE TRIAL IN TOM BELCHER'S STORE

By SAMUEL A. DERIEUX

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IT was a plain case of affinity between Davy Allen and Old Man Thornycroft's hound dog Buck. Davy, hurrying home along the country road one cold winter afternoon, his mind intent on finishing his chores before dark, looking back after passing Old Man Thornycroft's house to find Buck trying to follow him—*trying* to, because the old man, who hated to see anybody or anything but himself have his way, had chained a heavy block to him to keep him from doing what nature had intended him to do—roam the woods and poke his long nose in every briar patch after rabbits.

At the sight Davy stopped, and the dog came on, dragging behind him in the road the block of wood fastened by a chain to his collar, and trying at the same time to wag his tail. He was tan-coloured, lean as a rail, long-eared, a hound every inch; and Davy was a ragged country boy who lived alone with his mother, and who had an old single-barrel shotgun at home, and who had in his grave boy's eyes a look, clear and unmistakable, of woods and fields.

To say it was love at first sight when that hound, dragging his prison around with him, looked up into the boy's face, and when that ragged boy who loved the woods and had a gun at home looked down into the hound's eyes, would hardly be putting it strong enough. It was more than love—it was perfect understanding, perfect comprehension. "I'm your dog," said the hound's upraised, melancholy eyes. "I'll jump rabbits and bring them around for you to shoot. I'll make the frosty hills echo with music for you. I'll follow you everywhere

you go. I'm your dog if you want me—yours to the end of my days."

And Davy, looking down into those upraised, beseeching eyes, and at that heavy block of wood, and at the raw place the collar had worn on the neck, then at Old Man Thornycroft's bleak, unpainted house on the hill, with the unhomelike yard and the tumble-down fences, felt a great pity, the pity of the free for the imprisoned, and a great longing to own, not a dog, but *this* dog.

"Want to come along?" he grinned.

The hound sat down on his haunches, elevated his long nose and poured out to the cold winter sky the passion and longing of his soul. Davy understood, shook his head, looked once more into the pleading eyes, then at the bleak house from which this prisoner had dragged himself.

"That ol' devil!" he said. "He ain't fitten to own a dog. Oh, I wish he was mine!"

A moment he hesitated there in the road, then he turned and hurried away from temptation.

"He *ain't* mine," he muttered. "Oh' dammit all!"

But temptation followed him as it has followed many a boy and man. A little way down the road was a pasture through which by a footpath he could cut off half a mile of the three miles that lay between him and home. Poised on top of the high rail fence that bordered the road, he looked back. The hound was still trying to follow, walking straddle-legged, head down, all entangled with the taut chain that dragged the heavy block. The boy watched the frantic efforts, pity and longing on his face; then he jumped off the fence inside the pasture and hurried on down the hill, face set straight ahead.

He had entered a pine thicket when he heard behind the frantic, choking yelps of a dog in dire distress. Knowing what had happened, he ran back. Within the pasture the hound, only his hind feet touching the ground, was struggling and pawing at the fence. He had jumped, the block had caught, and was hanging him. Davy rushed to him. Breathing fast, he unclicked the chain. The block and chain fell on the other side of the fence, and the dog was free. Shrewdly the boy looked back

up the road; the woods hid the old man's house from view, and no one was to be seen. With a little grin of triumph he turned and broke into a run down the pasture hill toward the pines, the wind blowing gloriously into his face, the dog galloping beside him.

Still running, the two came out into the road that led home, and suddenly Davy stopped short and his face flushed. Yonder around the bend on his grey mare jogged Squire Kirby toward them, his pipe in his mouth, his white beard stuck cozily inside the bosom of his big overcoat. There was no use to run, no use to try to make the dog hide, no use to try to hide himself—the old man had seen them both. Suppose he knew whose dog this was! Heart pounding, Davy waited beside the road.

Mr. Kirby drew rein opposite them and looked down with eyes that twinkled under his bushy white brows. He always stopped to ask the boy how his mother was, and how they were getting along. Davy had been to his house many a time with eggs and chickens to sell, or with a load of seasoned oak wood. Many a time he had warmed before Mr. Kirby's fire in the big living- and bedroom combined, and eaten Mrs. Kirby's fine white cake covered with frosting. Never before had he felt ill at ease in the presence of the kindly old man.

"That's a genuine hound you got there, son, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Davy.

"Good for rabbits an' 'possums an' coons, eh?"

"He shore is!"

"Well, next big fat 'possum you an' him ketch, you bring that 'possum 'round an' me an' you'll talk business. Maybe we'll strike a bargain. Got any good sweet potatoes? Well, you bring four or five bushels along to eat that 'possum with. Haulin' any wood these days? Bring me a load or two of good, dry oak—pick it out, son, hear? How's your ma? All right? That's good. Here——"

He reached deep down in a pocket of his enormous faded overcoat, brought out two red apples, and leaned down out of his saddle, that creaked under the strain of his weight.

"Try one of 'em yourself, an' take one of 'em home to your ma. Git up, Mag!"

He jogged on down the road, and the boy, sobered, walked on. One thing was certain, though, Mr. Kirby hadn't known whose dog this was. What difference did it make, anyhow? He hadn't stolen anything. He couldn't let a dog choke to death before his eyes. What did Old Man Thornycroft care about a dog, anyhow, the hard-hearted old skin-flint!

He remembered the trouble his mother had had when his father died and Old Man Thornycroft pushed her for a note he had given. He had heard people talk about it at the time, and he remembered how white his mother's face had been. Old Man Thornycroft had refused to wait, and his mother had had to sell five acres of the best land on the little farm to pay the note. It was after the sale that Mr. Kirby, who lived five miles away, had ridden over.

"Why didn't you let me know, Mrs. Allen!" he had demanded. "I would have loaned you the money—gladly, gladly!" He had risen from the fire and pulled on the same overcoat he wore now. It was faded then, and that was two years ago.

It was sunset when Davy reached home to find his mother out in the clean-swept yard picking up chips in her apron. From the bedroom window of the little one-storied unpainted house came a bright red glow, and from the kitchen the smell of cooking meat. His mother straightened up from her task with a smile when with his new-found partner he entered the yard.

"Why, Davy," she asked, "where did you get him?"

"He—he just followed me, Ma."

"But whose dog is he?"

"He's mine, Ma—he just took up with me."

"Where, Davy?"

"Oh, way back down the road—in a pasture."

"He must belong to somebody."

"He's just a ol' hound dog, Ma, that's all he is. Lots of hounds don't belong to nobody—everybody knows that, Ma. Look at him, Ma. Mighty nigh starved to death. Lemme keep him. We can feed him on scraps. He can

sleep under the house. Me an' him will keep you in rabbits. You won't have to kill no more chickens. Nobody don't want him but me!"

From her gaunt height she looked down into the boy's eager eyes, then at the dog beside him. "All right, son," she said. "If he don't belong to anybody."

That night Davy alternately whistled and talked to the dog beside him as he husked the corn he had raised with his own hands, and chopped the wood he had cut and hauled—for since his father's death he had kept things going. He ate supper in a sort of haze; he hurried out with a tin plate of scraps; he fed the grateful, hungry dog on the kitchen steps. He begged some vaseline from his mother and rubbed it on the sore neck. Then he got two or three empty gunnysacks out of the corncrib, crawled under the house to a warm place beside the chimney, and spread them out for a bed. He went into the house whistling; he didn't hear a word of the chapter his mother read out of the Bible. Before he went to bed in the shed-room, he raised the window.

"You all right, old feller?" he called.

Underneath the house he heard the responsive tap-tap of a tail in the dry dust. He climbed out of his clothes, leaving them in a pile in the middle of the floor, tumbled into bed, and pulled the covers high over him.

"Golly!" he said. "Oh, golly!"

Next day he hunted till sundown. The Christmas holidays were on and there was no thought of school. He went only now and then, anyway, for since his father's death there was too much for him to do at home. He hunted in the opposite direction from Old Man Thornycroft's. It was three miles away; barriers of woods and bottoms and hills lay between, and the old man seldom stirred beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but Davy wanted to be on the safe side.

There were moments, though, when he thought of the old man, and wondered if he had missed the dog and whether he would make any search for him. There were sober moments, too, when he thought of his mother and Mr. Kirby, and wished he had told them the truth.

But then the long-drawn bay of the hound would come from the bottoms ahead, and he would hurry to the summons, his face flushed and eager. The music of the dog running, the sound of the shots, and his own triumphant yells started many an echo among the silent frosted hills that day. He came home with enough meat to last a week—six rabbits. As he hurried into the yard he held them up for the inspection of his mother, who was feeding the chickens.

"He's the finest rabbit dog ever was, Ma! Oh, golly, he can follow a trail! I never see anything like it, Ma, I never did! I'll skin 'em an' clean 'em after supper. You ought to have saw him, Ma! Golly!"

And while he chopped the wood and milked the cow and fed the mule, and skinned the rabbits, he saw other days ahead like this, and whistled and sang and talked to the hound, who followed close at his heels every step he took.

Then one afternoon, while he was patching the lot fence, with Buck sunning himself near the woodpile, came Old Man Thornycroft. Davy recognized his buggy as it turned the bend in the road. He quickly dropped his tools, called Buck to him and got behind the house where he could see without being seen. The buggy stopped in the road, and the old man, his hard, pinched face working, his buggy whip in his hand, came down the walk and called Mrs. Allen out on the porch.

"I just come to tell you," he cried, "that your boy Davy run off with my dog las' Friday evenin'! There ain't no use to deny it. I know all about it. I seen him when he passed in front of the house. I found the block I had chained to the dog beside the road. I heered Squire Jim Kirby talkin' to some men in Tom Belcher's sto' this very mornin'; just happened to overhear him as I come in. 'A boy an' a dog,' he says, 'is the happiest combination in nater.' Then he went on to tell about your boy an' a tan dog. He had met 'em in the road. Met 'em when? Last Friday evenin'. Oh, there ain't no use to deny it, Mrs. Allen! Your boy Davy—he *stole* my dog!"

"Mr. Thornycroft"—Davy could not see his mother,

but he could hear her voice tremble—"he did *not* know whose dog it was!"

"He didn't? He didn't?" yelled the old man. "An' him a boy that knows ever' dog for ten miles around! Right in front of my house, I tell you— that's where he picked him up—that's where he tolled him off! Didn't I tell you, woman, I seen him pass? Didn't I tell you I found the block down the road? Didn't know whose dog it was? Ridiculous, ridiculous! Call him, ask him, face him with it. Likely he'll lie—but you'll see his face. Call him, that's all I ask. Call him!"

"Davy!" called Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

Just a moment the boy hesitated. Then he went around the house. The hound stuck very close to him, eyes full of terror, tail tucked as he looked at the old man.

"There he is—with my dog!" cried the old man. "You didn't know whose dog it was, did you, son? Eh? You didn't know, now, did you?"

"Yes!" cried the boy "I knowed!"

"Hear that, Mrs. Allen? Did he know? What do you say now? He stole my dog, didn't he? That's what he done, didn't he? Answer me, woman! You come here!" he yelled, his face livid, and started, whip raised, toward boy and dog.

There were some smooth white stones the size of hen eggs arranged around a flower bed in the yard, and Davy stood near these stones—and now, quick as a flash, he stooped down and picked one up.

"You stop!" he panted, his face very white.

His mother cried out and came running toward him, but Thornycroft had stopped. No man in his right mind wants to advance on a country boy with a rock. Goliath tried it once.

"All right!" screamed the old man. "You steal first—then you try to assault an old man! I didn't come here to raise no row. I just came here to warn you, Mrs. Allen. I'll have the law on that boy—I'll have the law on him before another sun sets!"

He turned and hurried toward the buggy. Davy dropped the rock. Mrs. Allen stood looking at the old miser,

who was clambering into his buggy, with a sort of horror. Then she ran toward the boy.

"Oh, Davy! run after him. Take the dog to him. He's terrible, Davy, terrible! Run after him—anything—anything!"

But the boy looked up at her with grim mouth and hard eyes.

"I ain't a-goin' to do it, Ma!" he said.

It was after supper that very night that the summons came. Bob Kelley, rural policeman, brought it.

"Me an' Squire Kirby went to town this mornin'," he said, "to look up some things about court in the mornin.' This evenin' we run into Old Man Thornycroft on the street, lookin' for us. He was awful excited. He had been to Mr. Kirby's house, an' found out Mr. Kirby was in town, an' followed us. He wanted a warrant swore out right there. Mr. Kirby tried to argue with him, but it warn't no use. So at last Mr. Kirby turned to me. 'You go on back, Bob,' he said. 'This'll give me some more lookin' up to do. Tell my wife I'll just spend the night with Judge Fowler, an' git back in time for court in Belcher's sto' in the mornin'. An', Bob, you just stop by Mrs. Allen's—she's guardian of the boy—an' tell her I say to bring him to Belcher's sto' to-morrow mornin' at nine. You be there, too, Mr. Thornycroft—an,' by the way, bring that block of wood you been talkin' about.'"

That was all the squire had said, declared the rural policeman. No, he hadn't sent any other message—just said he would read up on the case. The rural policeman went out and closed the door behind him. It had been informal, hap-hazard, like the life of the community in which they lived. But, for all that, the law had knocked at the door of the Widow Allen, and left a white-faced mother and a bewildered boy behind.

They tried to resume their usual employments. Mrs. Allen sat down beside the table, picked up her sewing and put her glasses on, but her hands trembled when she tried to thread the needle. Davy sat on a split-bottom chair in the corner, his feet up on the rungs, and tried to be still; but his heart was pounding fast and there was a lump in his throat. Presently he got up and

went out of doors, to get in some kindling on the back porch before it snowed, he told his mother. But he went because he couldn't sit there any longer, because he was about to explode with rage and grief and fear and bitterness.

He did not go toward the woodpile—what difference did dry kindling make now? At the side of the house he stooped down and softly called Buck. The hound came to him, wriggling along under the beams, and he leaned against the house and lovingly pulled the briar-torn ears. A long time he stayed there, feeling on his face already the fine mist of snow. To-morrow the ground would be white; it didn't snow often in that country; day after to-morrow everybody would hunt rabbits—everybody but him and Buck.

It was snowing hard when at last he went back into the warm room, so warm that he pulled off his coat. Once more he tried to sit still in the split-bottom chair. But there is no rage that consumes like the rage of a boy. In its presence he is so helpless! If he were a man, thought Davy, he would go to Old Man Thornycroft's house that night, call him out, and thrash him in the road. If he were a man, he would curse, he would do something. He looked wildly about the room, the hopelessness of it all coming over him in a wave. Then suddenly, because he wasn't a man, because he couldn't do what he wanted to do, he began to cry, not as a boy cries, but more as a man cries, in shame and bitterness, his shoulders shaken by great convulsive sobs, his head buried in his hands, his fingers running through his tangled mop of hair.

"Davy, Davy!" The sewing and the scissors slipped to the floor. His mother was down on her knees beside him, one arm about his shoulders, trying to pry his face from his hands, trying to look into his eyes. "You're my man, Davy! You're the only man, the only help I've got. You're my life, Davy. Poor boy! Poor child!"

He caught hold of her convulsively, and she pressed his head against her breast. Then he saw that she was crying, and he grew quiet, and wiped his eyes with his ragged coat sleeve.

"I'm all right now, Ma," he said; but he looked at her wildly.

She did not follow him into his little unceiled bedroom. She must have known that he had reached that age where no woman could help him. It must be a man now to whom he could pin his faith. And while he lay awake, tumbling and tossing, along with bitter thoughts of Old Man Thornycroft came other bitter thoughts of Mr. Kirby, whom, deep down in his boy's heart, he had worshipped—Mr. Kirby, who had sided with Old Man Thornycroft and sent a summons with—no message for him. "God!" he said. "God!" And pulled his hair, down there under the covers; and he hated the law that would take a dog from him and give it back to that old man—the law that Mr. Kirby represented.

It was still snowing when next morning he and his mother drove out of the yard and he turned the head of the reluctant old mule in the direction of Belcher's store. A bitter wind cut their faces, but it was not as bitter as the heart of the boy. Only twice on that five-mile ride did he speak. The first time was when he looked back to find Buck, whom they had left at home, thinking he would stay under the house on such a day, following very close behind the buggy.

"Might as well let him come on," said the boy.

The second time was when they came in sight of Belcher's store, dim yonder through the swirling snow. Then he looked up into his mother's face.

"Ma," he said grimly, "I ain't no thief!"

She smiled as bravely as she could with her stiffened face and with the tears so near the surface. She told him that she knew it, and that everybody knew it. But there was no answering smile on the boy's set face.

The squire's gray mare, standing huddled up in the midst of other horses and of buggies under the shed near the store, told that court had probably already convened. Hands numb, the boy hitched the old mule to the only rack left under the shed, then made Buck lie down under the buggy. Heart pounding, he went up on the store porch with his mother and pushed the door open.

There was a commotion when they entered. The

men, standing about the pot-bellied stove, their overcoats steaming, made way for them. Old Man Thornycroft looked quickly and triumphantly around. In the rear of the store the squire rose from a table, in front of which was a cleared space.

"Pull up a chair nigh the stove for Mrs. Allen, Tom Belcher," he said. "I'm busy tryin' this chicken-stealin' nigger. When I get through, Mrs. Allen, if you're ready I'll call your case."

Davy stood beside his mother while the trial of the negro proceeded. Some of the fight had left him now, crowded down here among all these grown men, and especially in the presence of Mr. Kirby, for it is hard for a boy to be bitter long. But with growing anxiety he heard the sharp questions the magistrate asked the negro; he saw the frown of justice; he heard the sentence "sixty days on the gang." And the negro had stolen only a chicken—and he had run off with another man's dog!

"The old man's rough this mornin'," a man whispered to another above him; and he saw the furtive grin on the face of Old Man Thornycroft, who leaned against the counter, waiting.

His heart jumped into his mouth when after a silence the magistrate spoke: "Mr. Thornycroft, step forward, sir. Put your hand on the book here. Now tell us about that dog of yours that was stole."

Looking first at the magistrate, then at the crowd, as if to impress them also, the old man told in a high-pitched, excited voice all the details—his seeing Davy Allen pass in front of his house last Friday afternoon, his missing the dog, his finding the block of wood down the road beside the pasture fence, his over-hearing the squire's talk right here in the store, his calling on Mrs. Allen, the boy's threatening him.

"I tell you," he cried, "that's a dangerous character—that boy!"

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked the squire.

"It's enough, ain't it?" demanded Thornycroft angrily.

The squire nodded and spat into the cuspidor between his feet. "I think so," he said quietly. "Stand aside.

Davy Allen, step forward. Put your hand on the book here, son. Davy, how old are you?"

The boy gulped. "Thirteen years old, goin' on fo'teen."

"You're old enough, son, to know the nater of the oath you're about to take. For over two years you've been the mainstay an' support of your mother. You've had to carry the burdens and responsibilities of a man, Davy. The testimony you give in this case will be the truth, the whole truth an' nothin' but the truth, so help you God. What about it?"

Davy nodded, his face very white.

"All right now. Tell us about it. Talk loud so we can hear—all of us."

The boy's eyes never left Mr. Kirby's while he talked. Something in them held him, fascinated him, overawed him. Very large and imposing he looked there behind his little table, with his faded old overcoat on, and there was no sound in the room but the boy's clear voice.

"An' you come off an' left the dog at first?"

"Yes, sir,"

"An' you didn't unfasten the chain from the block till the dog got caught in the fence?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Did you try to get him to follow you then?"

"No, sir, he wanted to."

"Ask him, Mr. Kirby," broke in Thornycroft angrily, "if he tried to drive him home!"

"I'll ask him whatever seems fit an' right to me, sir," said Mr. Kirby. "What did you tell your ma, Davy, when you got home?"

"I told her he followed me."

"Did you tell her whose dog he was?"

"No, sir."

"Ain't that what you ought to have done? Ain't it?"

Davy hesitated. "Yes, sir."

There was a slight shuffling movement among the men crowded about. Somebody cleared his throat. Mr. Kirby resumed.

"This block you been tellin' about— how was it fastened to the dog?"

"Thar was a chain fastened to the block by a staple. The other end was fastened to the collar."

"How heavy do you think that block was?"

"About ten pound, I reckon."

"Five," broke in Old Man Thornycroft with a sneer.

Mr. Kirby turned to him. "You fetched it with you, didn't you? I told you to. It's evidence. Bob Kelley, go out to Mr. Thornycroft's buggy an' bring that block of wood into court."

The room was silent while the rural policeman was gone. Davy still stood in the cleared space before Mr. Kirby, his ragged overcoat on, his tattered hat in his hand, breathing fast, afraid to look at his mother. Everybody turned when Kelley came in with the block of wood. Everbody craned their necks to watch, while at the magistrate's order Kelley weighed the block of wood on the store's scales, which he put on the magistrate's table

"Fo'teen punds," said Mr. Kirby. "Take the scales away."

"It had rubbed all the skin off'n the dog's neck," broke in Davy impulsively. "It was all raw an' bleedin'."

"Aw, that ain't so!" cried Thornycroft.

"Is the dog out there?" asked Mr. Kirby.

"Yes, sir, under the buggy."

"Bob Kelley, you go out an' bring that dog into court."

The rural policeman went out, and came back with the hound, who looked eagerly up from one face to the other, then, seeing Davy, came to him and stood against him, still looking around with that expression of melancholy on his face that a hound dog always wears except when he's in action.

"Bring the dog here, son!" commanded Mr. Kirby. He examined the raw place on the neck. "Any of you gentlemen care to take a look?" he asked.

"It was worse than that," declared Davy, "till I rubbed vase-leen on it."

Old Man Thornycroft pushed forward, face quivering. "What's all this got to do with the boy stealin'

the dog?" he demanded. "That's what I want to know—what's it got to do?"

"Mr. Thornycroft," said Kirby, "at nine o'clock this mornin' this place ceased to be Tom Belcher's sto', an' become a court of justice. Some things are seemly in a court, some not. You stand back there!"

The old man stepped back to the counter, and stood pulling his chin, his eyes running over the crowd of faces.

"Davy Allen," spoke Mr. Kirby, "you stand back there with your ma. Tom Belcher make way for him. And, Tom, s'pose you put another stick of wood in that stove an' poke up the fire." He took off his glasses, blew on them, polished them with his handkerchief and readjusted them. Then, leaning back in his chair, he spoke.

"Gentlemen, from the beginnin' of time, as fur back as records go, a dog's been the friend, companion, an' protector of man. Folks say he come from the wolf, but that ain't no reflection on him, seein' that we come from monkeys ourselves, an' I believe, takin' all things into account, I'd as soon have a wolf for a ancestor as a monkey, an' a little ruther.

"Last night in the libery of my old friend Judge Fowler in town, I looked up some things about this dog question. I find that there have been some queer decisions handed down by the courts, showin' that the law does recognize the fact that a dog is different from other four-footed critters. For instance, it has been held that a dog has a right to protect not only his life but his dignity; that where a man worries a dog beyond what would be reasonable to expect any self respectin' critter to stand, that dog has a right to bite that man, an' that man can't collect any damages—provided the bitin' is done at the time of the worryin' an' in sudden heat an' passion. That has been held in the courts, gentlemen. The law that holds for man holds for dogs.

"Another thing: If the engineer of a railroad train sees a cow or a horse or a sheep on the track, or a hog, he must stop the train or the road is liable for any damage done 'em. But if he sees a man walkin' along the track, he has a right to presume that the man, bein' a critter of more or less intelligence, will git off, an' he is

not called on to stop under ordinary circumstances. The same thing holds true of a dog. The engineer has a right to presume that the dog, bein' a critter of intelligence, will get off the track. Here again the law is the same for dog an' man.

"*But*—if the engineer has reason to believe that the man's mind is took up with some object of an engrossin' nater, he is supposed to stop the train till the man comes to himself an' looks around. The same thing holds true of a dog. If the engineer has reason to suspect that the dog's mind is occupied with some engrossin' topic, he must stop the train. That case has been tested in this very state, where a dog was on the track settin' a covey of birds in the adjoinin' field. The railroad was held responsible for the death of that dog, because the engineer ought to have known by the action of the dog that his mind was on somethin' else beside railroad trains an' locomotives."

Again the magistrate spat into the cuspidor between his feet. Davy, still watching him, felt his mother's grip on his arm. Everyone was listening so closely that the whispered sneering comment of Old Man Thornycroft to the man next to him was audible, "What's all this got to do with the case?"

"The p'int I'm gettin' to is this," went on Mr. Kirby, not paying attention to him: "a dog is not like a cow or a horse or any four-footed critter. He's a individual, an' so the courts have held in spirit if not in actual words. Now this court of mine here in Tom Belcher's sto, ain't like other courts. I have to do the decidin' myself; I have to interpret the true spirit of the law, without technicalities an' quibbles such as becloud it in other an' higher courts. An' I hold that since a dog is *de facto* an' *de jure* an individual, he has a right to life, liberty an' the pursuit of happiness.

"Therefore, gentlemen, I hold that that houn' dog, Buck, had a perfect right to follow that boy, Davy Allen, there; an' I hold that Davy Allen was not called on to drive that dog back, or interfere in any way with that dog followin' him if the dog so chose. You've heard the evidence of the boy. You know, an' I know, he has

spoke the truth this day, an' there ain't no evidence to the contrary. The boy did not entice the dog. He even went down the road, leavin' him behind. He run back only when the dog was in dire need an' chokin' to death. He wasn't called on to put that block an' chain back on the dog. He couldn't help it if the dog followed him. He no more stole that dog than I stole him. He's no more a thief than I am. I dismiss this case, Mr. Thornycroft, this case you've brought against Davy Allen. I declare him innocent of the charge of theft. I set it down right here on the records of this court."

"Davy!" gasped Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

But, face working, eyes blazing, Old Man Thornycroft started forward, and the dog, panting, shrank between boy and mother. "Jim Kirby!" cried the old man, stopping for a moment in the cleared space. "You're magistrate. What you say goes. But that dog thar—he's mine! He's my property—mine by law!" He jerked a piece of rope out of his overcoat pocket and came on toward the cowering dog. "Tom Belcher, Bob Kelley! Stop that dog! He's mine!"

"Davy!" Mrs. Allen was holding the boy. "Don't—don't say anything. You're free to go home. Your record's clear. The dog's his!"

"Hold on!" Mr. Kirby had risen from his chair. "You come back here, Mr. Thornycroft. This court's not adjourned yet. If you don't get back, I'll stick a fine to you for contempt you'll remember the rest of your days. You stand where you are, sir! Right there! Don't move till I'm through!"

Quivering, the old man stood where he was. Mr. Kirby sat down, face flushed, eyes blazing. "Punch up that fire, Tom Belcher," he said. "I ain't through yet."

The hound came trembling back to Davy, looked up in his face, licked his hand, then sat down at the side opposite his former master, looking around now and then at the old man, terror in his eyes. In the midst of a deathly silence the magistrate resumed.

"What I was goin' to say, gentlemen, is this: I'm not only magistrate, I'm an officer in an organization that you country fellers likely don't know of, an organization

known as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. As such an officer it's my duty to report an' bring to trial any man who treats a dumb brute in a cruel an' inhuman way. Mr. Thornycroft, judgin' by the looks of that houn', you ain't give him enough to eat to keep a cat alive—an' a cat, we all know, don't eat much, just messes over her vittles. You condemned that po' beast, for no fault of his own, to the life of a felon. A houn' that ain't happy at best, he's melancholy; an' a houn' that ain't allowed to run free is of all critters the wretchedest. This houn's neck is rubbed raw. God only knows what he's suffered in mind an' body. A man that would treat a dog that way ain't fitten to own one. An' I hereby notify you that, on the evidence of this boy, an' the evidence before our eyes, I will indict you for breakin' the law regardin' the treatment of animals; an' I notify you, furthermore, that as magistrate I'll put the law on you for that same thing. An' it might be interestin' to you to know, sir, that I can fine you as much as five hundred dollars, or send you to jail for one year, or both, if I see fit—an' there ain't no tellin' but what I will see fit, sir."

He looked sternly at Thornycroft.

"Now I'm goin' to make a proposition that I advise you to jump at like you never jumped at anything before. If you will give up that houn' Buck—to me, say, or to anybody I decide will be kind to him—I will let the matter drop. If you will go home like a peaceable citizen, you won't hear no more about it from me; but if you don't—"

"Git out of my way!" cried Old Man Thornycroft. "All of you! I'm goin'—I'm goin'!"

"Hold on!" said Mr. Kirby, when he had got almost to the door. "Do you, in the presence of these witnesses, turn over this dog to me, relinquishin' all claims to him, on the conditions named? Answer Yes or No?"

There was a moment's silence; then the old man cried out:

"Take the old hound! He ain't wuth the salt in his vittles!"

He jerked the door open.

"Yes or no?" called Mr. Kirby inexorably.

"Yes!" yelled the old man, and slammed the door behind him.

"One minute, gentlemen," said Mr. Kirby, rising from the table and gathering his papers and records together. "Just one more thing: If anybody here has any evidence, or knows of any, tendin' to show that this boy Davy Allen is not the proper person to turn over a houn' dog to, I hope he will speak up." He waited a moment. "In the absence of any objections, an' considerin' the evidence that's been given here this mornin', I think I'll just let that dog go back the way he come. Thank you, gentlemen. Court's adjourned!"

PORCELAIN CUPS

By JAMES BRANCH CABELL

From *Century Magazine*

I

Of Greatness Intimately Viewed

"OH, but they are beyond praise," said Cynthia Allonby, enraptured, "and certainly you should have presented them to the Queen."

"Her majesty already possesses a cup of that ware," replied Lord Pevensey. "It was one of her New Year's gifts, from Robert Cecil. Hers is, I believe, not quite so fine as either of yours; but then, they tell me, there is not the like of this pair in England, nor indeed on the hither side of Cataia."

He set the two pieces of Chinese pottery upon the shelves in the south corner of the room. These cups were of that sea-green tint called céladon, with a very wonderful glow and radiance. Such oddities were the last vogue at court in this year of grace 1593: and Cynthia could not but speculate as to what monstrous sum Lord Pevensey had paid for this his last gift to her.

Now he turned, smiling, a really superb creature in his blue and gold. "I had another message from the Queen——"

"George," Cynthia said, with fond concern, "it frightens me to see you thus foolhardy, in tempting alike the Queen's anger and the Plague."

"Eh, as goes the Plague, it spares nine out of ten," he answered, lightly. "The Queen, I grant you, is another pair of sleeves, for an irritated Tudor spares nobody."

But Cynthia Allonby kept silence, and did not exactly

smile, while she appraised her famous young kinsman. She was flattered by, and a little afraid of, the gay self-confidence which led anybody to take such chances. Two weeks ago it was that the painted terrible old Queen had named Lord Pevensey to go straightway into France, where rumour had it, King Henri was preparing to renounce the Reformed Religion, and making his peace with the Pope: and for two weeks Pevensey had lingered, on one pretence or another, at his house in London, with the Plague creeping about the city like an invisible incalculable flame, and the Queen asking questions at Windsor. Of all the monarchs that had ever reigned in England, Elizabeth was the least used to having her orders disregarded. Meanwhile Lord Pevensey came every day to the Marquis of Falmouth's lodgings at Deptford; and every day Lord Pevensey pointed out to the marquis's daughter that Pevensey, whose wife had died in childbirth a year back, did not intend to go into France, for nobody could foretell how long a stay, as a widower. Certainly it was all very flattering . . .

"Yes, and you would be an excellent match," said Cynthia, aloud, "if that were all. And yet, what must I reasonably expect in marrying, sir, the famous Earl of Pevensey?"

"A great deal of love and petting, my dear. And if there were anything else to which you had a fancy, I would get it for you."

Her glance went to those lovely cups and lingered fondly. "Yes, dear Master Generosity, if it could be purchased or manufactured, you would get it for me——"

"If it exists I will get it for you," he declared.

"I think that it exists. But I am not learned enough to know what it is. George, if I married you I would have money and fine clothes and soft hours and many lackeys to wait on me, and honour from all men. And you would be kind to me, I know, when you returned from the day's work at Windsor—or Holyrood or the Louvre. But do you not see that I would always be to you only a rather costly luxury, like those cups, which the Queen's minister could afford to keep for his hours of leisure?"

He answered: "You are all in all to me. You know it. Oh, very well do you know and abuse your power, you adorable and lovely baggage, who have kept me dancing attendance for a fortnight, without ever giving me an honest yes or no." He gesticulated. "Well, but life is very dull in Deptford village, and it amuses you to twist a Queen's adviser around your finger! I see it plainly, you minx, and I acquiesce because it delights me to give you pleasure, even at the cost of some dignity. Yet I may no longer shirk the Queen's business,—no, not even to amuse you, my dear."

"You said you had heard from her—again?"

"I had this morning my orders, under Glorianna's own fair hand, either to depart to-morrow into France or else to come to-morrow to Windsor. I need not say that in the circumstances I consider France the more wholesome."

Now the girl's voice was hurt and wistful. "So, for the thousandth time, is it proven the Queen's business means more to you than I do. Yes, certainly it is just as I said, George."

He observed, unruffled: "My dear, I scent unreason. This is a high matter. If the French King compounds with Rome, it means war for Protestant England. Even you must see that."

She replied, sadly: "Yes, even I! oh, certainly, my lord, even a half-witted child of seventeen can perceive as much as that."

"I was not speaking of half-witted persons, as I remember. Well, it chances that I am honoured by the friendship of our gallant Béarnais, and am supposed to have some claim upon him, thanks to my good fortune last year in saving his life from the assassin Barrière. It chances that I may perhaps become, under providence, the instrument of preserving my fellow countrymen from much grief and trumpet-sounding and throat-cutting. Instead of pursuing that chance, two weeks ago—as was my duty—I have dangled at your apron-strings, in the vain hope of softening the most variable and hardest heart in the world. Now, clearly, I have not the right to do that any longer."

She admired the ennobled, the slightly rapt look which, she knew, denoted that George Bulmer was doing his duty as he saw it, even in her disappointment. "No, you have not the right. You are wedded to your statecraft, to your patriotism, to your self-advancement, or christen it what you will. You are wedded, at all events, to your man's business. You have not the time for such trifles as giving a maid that foolish and lovely sort of wooing to which every maid looks forward in her heart of hearts. Indeed, when you married the first time it was a kind of infidelity; and I am certain that poor dear mouse-like Mary must have felt that often and over again. Why, do you not see, George, even now, that your wife will always come second to your real love?"

"In my heart, dear sophist, you will always come first. But it is not permitted that any loyal gentleman devote every hour of his life to sighing and making sonnets, and to the general solacing of a maid's loneliness in this dull little Deptford. Nor would you, I am sure, desire me to do so."

"I hardly know what I desire," she told him ruefully. "But I know that when you talk of your man's business I am lonely and chilled and far away from you. And I know that I cannot understand more than half your fine high notions about duty and patriotism and serving England and so on," the girl declared: and she flung wide her lovely little hands, in a despairing gesture. "I admire you, sir, when you talk of England. It makes you handsomer—yes, even handsomer!—somehow. But all the while I am remembering that England is just an ordinary island inhabited by a number of ordinary persons, for the most of whom I have no particular feeling one way or the other."

Pevensey looked at her for a while with queer tenderness. Then he smiled. "No, I could not quite make you understand, my dear. But, ah, why fuddle that quaint little brain by trying to understand such matters as lie without your realm? For a woman's kingdom is the home, my dear, and her throne is in the heart of her husband——"

"All this is but another way of saying your lordship

would have us cups upon a shelf," she pointed out—"in readiness for your leisure."

He shrugged, said "Nonsense!" and began more lightly to talk of other matters. Thus and thus he would do in France, such and such trinkets he would fetch back—"as toys for the most whimsical, the loveliest and the most obstinate child in all the world," he phrased it. And they would be married, Pevensey declared, in September: nor (he gaily said) did he propose to have any further argument about it. Children should be seen—the proverb was dusty, but it particularly applied to pretty children.

Cynthia let him talk. She was just a little afraid of his self confidence, and of this tall nobleman's habit of getting what he wanted, in the end: but she dispiritedly felt that Pevensey had failed her. He treated her as a silly infant: and his want of her, even in that capacity, was a secondary matter: he was going into France, for all his petting talk, and was leaving her to shift as she best might, until he could spare the time to resume his love-making . . . .

II

What Comes of Scribbling

Now when Pevensey had gone the room seemed darkened by the withdrawal of so much magnificence. Cynthia watched from the window as the tall earl rode away, with three handsomely clad retainers. Yes, George was very fine and admirable, no doubt of it: even so, there was relief in the reflection that for a month or two she was rid of him.

Turning, she faced a lean dishevelled man, who stood by the Magdalen tapestry scratching his chin. He had unquiet bright eyes, this out-at-elbows poet whom a marquis's daughter was pleased to patronize, and his red hair to-day was unpardonably puzzled. Nor were his manners beyond reproach, for now, without saying anything, he too went to the window. He dragged one foot a little as he walked.

"So my lord Pevensey departs! Look how he rides in

triumph! like lame Tamburlaine, with Techelles and Usumcasane and Theridamas to attend him, and with the sunset turning the dust raised by their horses' hoofs into a sort of golden haze about them. It is a beautiful world. And truly, Mistress Cyn," the poet said, reflectively, "that Pevensey is a very splendid ephemera. If not a king himself, at least he goes magnificently to settle the affairs of kings. Were modesty not my failing, Mistress Cyn, I would acclaim you as strangely lucky, in being beloved by two fine fellows that have not their like in England."

"Truly you are not always thus modest, Kit Marlowe——"

"But, Lord, how seriously Pevensey takes it all! and himself in particular! Why, there departs from us, in befitting state, a personage whose opinion as to every topic in the world is written legibly in the carriage of those fine shoulders, even when seen from behind and from so considerable a distance. And in not one syllable do any of these opinions differ from the opinions of his great-great-grandfathers. Oho, and hark to Deptford! now all the oafs in the Corn-market are cheering this bulwark of Protestant England, this rising young hero of a people with no nonsense about them. Yes, it is a very quaint and rather splendid ephemera."

A marquis's daughter could not quite approve of the way in which this shoemaker's son, however talented, railed at his betters. "Pevensey will be the greatest man in these kingdoms some day. Indeed, Kit Marlowe, there are those who say he is that much already."

"Oh, very probably! Still, I am puzzled by human greatness. A century hence what will he matter, this Pevensey? His ascent and his declension will have been completed, and his foolish battles and treaties will have given place to other foolish battles and treaties, and oblivion will have swallowed this glistening bluebottle, plumes and fine lace and stately ruff and all. Why, he is but an adviser to the queen of half an island, whereas my Tamburlaine was lord of all the golden ancient East: and what does my Tamburlaine matter now, save that he gave Kit Marlowe the subject of a drama? Hah, softly

though! for does even that very greatly matter? Who really cares to-day about what scratches were made upon wax by that old Euripides, the latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose? No, not quite worthy, as yet!"

And thereupon the shabby fellow sat down in the tall leather-covered chair which Pevensey had just vacated: and this Marlowe nodded his flaming head portentously. "Hoh, look you, I am displeased, Mistress Cyn, I cannot lend my approval to this over-greedy oblivion that gapes for all. No, it is not a satisfying arrangement that I should teeter insecurely through the void on a gob of mud, and be expected bye and bye to relinquish even that crazy foothold. Even for Kit Marlowe death lies in wait! and it may be, not anything more after death, not even any lovely words to play with. Yes, and this Marlowe may amount to nothing, after all: and his one chance of amounting to that which he intends may be taken away from him at any moment!"

He touched the breast of a weather-beaten doublet. He gave her that queer twisted sort of smile which the girl could not but find attractive, somehow. He said: "Why but this heart thumping here inside me may stop any moment like a broken clock. Here is Euripides writing better than I: and here in my body, under my hand, is the mechanism upon which depend all those masterpieces that are to blot the Athenian from the reckoning, and I have no control of it!"

"Indeed, I fear that you control few things," she told him, "and that least of all do you control your taste for taverns and bad women. Oh, I hear tales of you!" And Cynthia raised a reproving fore-finger.

"True tales, no doubt." He shrugged. "Lacking the moon he vainly cried for, the child learns to content himself with a penny whistle."

"Ah, but the moon is far away," the girl said, smiling—"too far to hear the sound of human crying: and besides, the moon, as I remember it, was never a very amorous goddess—"

"Just so," he answered: "also she was called Cynthia, and she, too, was beautiful."

"Yet is it the heart that cries to me, my poet?" she asked him, softly, "or just the lips?"

"Oh, both of them, most beautiful and inaccessible of goddesses." Then Marlowe leaned toward her, laughing and shaking that disreputable red head. "Still, you are very foolish, in your latest incarnation, to be wasting your rays upon carpet earls who will not outwear a century. Were modesty not my failing, I repeat, I could name somebody who will last longer. Yes, and—if, but I lacked that plaguey virtue—I would advise you to go a-gypsying with that nameless somebody, so that two manikins might snatch their little share of the big things that are eternal, just as the butterfly fares intrepidly and joyously, with the sun for his torch-boy, through a universe wherein thought cannot estimate the unimportance of a butterfly, and wherein not even the chaste moon is very important. Yes, certainly I would advise you to have done with this vanity of courts and masques, of satins and fans and fiddles, this dallying with tinsels and bright vapours; and very movingly I would exhort you to seek out Arcadia, travelling hand in hand with that still nameless somebody." And of a sudden the restless man began to sing.

Sang Kit Marlowe:

"Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

"And we will sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals——"

But the girl shook her small, wise head decisively. "That is all very fine, but, as it happens, there is no such place as this Arcadia, where people can frolic in perpetual sunlight the year round, and find their food and clothing miraculously provided. No, nor can you, I am afraid, give me what all maids really, in their

heart of hearts, desire far more than any sugar-candy Arcadia. Oh, as I have so often told you, Kit, I think you love no woman. You love words. And your seraglio is tenanted by very beautiful words, I grant you, though there is no longer any Sestos builded of agate and crystal, either, Kit Marlowe. For, as you may perceive, sir, I have read all that lovely poem you left with me last Thursday——"

She saw how interested he was, saw how he almost smirked. "Aha, so you think it not quite bad, eh, the conclusion of my 'Hero and Leander'?"

"It is your best. And your middlemost, my poet, is better than aught else in English," she said, politely, and knowing how much he delighted to hear such remarks.

"Come, I retract my charge of foolishness, for you are plainly a wench of rare discrimination. And yet you say I do not love you! Cynthia, you are beautiful, you are perfect in all things. You are that heavenly Helen of whom I wrote, some persons say, acceptably enough—— How strange it was I did not know that Helen was dark-haired and pale! for certainly yours is that immortal loveliness which must be served by poets in life and death."

"And I wonder how much of these ardours," she thought, "is kindled by my praise of his verses?" She bit her lip, and she regarded him with a hint of sadness. She said, aloud: "But I did not, after all, speak to Lord Pevensey concerning the printing of your poem. Instead, I burned your 'Hero and Leander'."

She saw him jump, as under a whip-lash. Then he smiled again, in that wry fashion of his. "I lament the loss to letters, for it was my only copy. But you knew that."

"Yes, Kit, I knew it was your only copy."

"Oho! and for what reason did you burn it, may one ask?"

"I thought you loved it more than you loved me. It was my rival, I thought——" The girl was conscious of remorse, and yet it was remorse commingled with a mounting joy.

"And so you thought a jingle scribbled upon a bit of paper could be your rival with me!"

Then Cynthia no longer doubted, but gave a joyous little sobbing laugh, for the love of her disreputable dear poet was sustaining the stringent testing she had devised. She touched his freckled hand caressingly, and her face was as no man had ever seen it, and her voice, too, caressed him.

"Ah, you have made me the happiest of women, Kit! Kit, I am almost disappointed in you, though, that you do not grieve more for the loss of that beautiful poem."

His smiling did not waver; yet the lean, red-haired man stayed motionless. "Do I appear perturbed?" he said. "Why, but see how lightly I take the destruction of my life-work in this, my masterpiece! For I can assure you it was a masterpiece, the fruit of two years' toil and of much loving repolishment——"

"Ah, but you love me better than such matters, do you not?" she asked him, tenderly. "Kit Marlowe, I adore you! Sweetheart, do you not understand that a woman wants to be loved utterly and entirely? She wants no rivals, not even paper rivals. And so often when you talked of poetry I have felt lonely and chilled and far away from you, and I have been half envious, dear, of your Heros and your Helens, and your other good-for-nothing Greek minxes. But now I do not mind them at all. And I will make amends, quite prodigal amends, for my naughty jealousy; and my poet shall write me some more lovely poems, so he shall——"

He said "You fool!"

And she drew away from him, for this man was no longer smiling.

"You burned my 'Hero and Leander'! You! you big-eyed fool! You lisping idiot! you wriggling, cuddling worm! you silken bag of guts! had not even you the wit to perceive it was immortal beauty which would have lived long after you and I were stinking dirt? And you, a half-witted animal, a shining, chattering parrot, lay claws to it!" Marlowe had risen in a sort of seizure, in a condition which was really quite unrea-

sonable when you considered that only a poem was at stake, even a rather long poem.

And Cynthia began to smile, with tremulous hurt-looking young lips. "So my poet's love is very much the same as Pevensey's love! And I was right, after all."

"Oh, oh!" said Marlowe, "that ever a poet should love a woman! What jokes does the lewd flesh contrive!" Of a sudden he was calmer: and then rage fell from him like a dropped cloak, and he viewed her as with respectful wonder. "Why, but you sitting there, with goggling innocent bright eyes, are an allegory of all that is most droll and tragic. Yes, and indeed there is no reason to blame you. It is not your fault that every now and then is born a man who serves an idea which is to him the most important thing in the world. It is not your fault that this man perforce inhabits a body to which the most important thing in the world is a woman. Certainly it is not your fault that this compost makes yet another jumble of his two desires, and persuades himself that the two are somehow allied. The woman inspires, the woman uplifts, the woman strengthens him for his high work, saith he! Well, well, perhaps there are such women, but by land and sea I have encountered none of them."

All this was said while Marlowe shuffled about the room, with bent shoulders, and nodding his tousled red head, and limping as he walked. Now Marlowe turned, futile and shabby-looking, just where Pevensey had loomed resplendent a while since. Again she saw the poet's queer, twisted, jeering smile.

"What do you care for my ideals? What do you care for the ideals of that tall earl whom you have held from his proper business for a fortnight? or for the ideals of any man alive? Why, not one thread of that dark hair, not one snap of those white little fingers, except when ideals irritate you by distracting a man's attention from Cynthia Allonby. Otherwise, he is welcome enough to play with his incomprehensible toys."

He jerked a thumb toward the shelves behind him.

"Oho, you virtuous pretty ladies! what all you value is such matters as those cups: they please the eye, they are worth sound money, and people envy you the possession of them. So you cherish your shiny mud cups, and you burn my 'Hero and Leander': and I declaim all this dull nonsense, over the ashes of my ruined dreams, thinking at bottom of how pretty you are, and of how much I would like to kiss you. That is the real tragedy, the immortal tragedy, that I should still hanker after you, my Cynthia——"

His voice dwelt tenderly upon her name. His fever-haunted eyes were tender, too, for just a moment. Then he grimaced.

"No, I am wrong—the tragedy strikes deeper. The root of it is that there is in you and in all your glittering kind no malice, no will to do harm nor to hurt anything, but just a bland and invincible and, upon the whole, a well-meaning stupidity, informing a bright and soft and delicately scented animal. So you work ruin among those men who serve ideals, not foreplanning ruin, not desiring to ruin anything, not even having sufficient wit to perceive the ruin when it is accomplished. You are, when all is done, not even detestable, not even a worthy peg whereon to hang denunciatory sonnets, you shallow-pated pretty creatures whom poets —oh, and in youth all men are poets!—whom poets, now and always, are doomed to hanker after to the detriment of their poesy. No, I concede it: you kill without premeditation, and without ever suspecting your hands to be anything but stainless. So in logic I must retract all my harsh words; and I must, without any hint or reproach, endeavour to bid you a somewhat more civil farewell."

She had regarded him, throughout this preposterous and uncalled-for harangue, with sad composure, with a forgiving pity. Now she asked him, very quietly, "Where are you going, Kit?"

"To the Golden Hind, O gentle, patient and unjustly persecuted virgin martyr!" he answered, with an exaggerated bow—"since that is the part in which you now elect to posture."

"Not to that low, vile place again!"

"But certainly I intend in that tavern to get tipsy as quickly as possible: for then the first woman I see will for the time become the woman whom I desire, and who exists nowhere." And with that the red-haired man departed, limping and singing as he went to look for a trull in a pot-house.

Sang Kit Marlowe:

"And I will make her beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

"A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair-linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold——"

III

Economics of Egeria

She sat quite still when Marlowe had gone.

"He will get drunk again," she thought despondently. "Well, and why should it matter to me if he does, after all that outrageous ranting? He has been unforgivably insulting—Oh, but none the less, I do not want to have him babbling of the roses and gold of that impossible fairy world which the poor, frantic child really believes in, to some painted woman of the town who will laugh at him. I loathe the thought of her laughing at him—and kissing him! His notions are wild foolishness; but I at least wish that they were not foolishness, and that hateful woman will not care one way or the other."

So Cynthia sighed, and to comfort her forlorn condition fetched a hand-mirror from the shelves whereon glowed her green cups. She touched each cup caressingly in passing; and that which she found in the mirror, too, she regarded not unappreciatively, from

varying angles. . . . Yes, after all, dark hair and a pale skin had their advantages at a court where pink and yellow women were so much the fashion as to be common. Men remembered you more distinctively. Though nobody cared for men, in view of their unreasonable behaviour, and their absolute self-centeredness. . . . Oh, it was pitiable, it was grotesque, she reflected sadly, how Pevensey and Kitt Marlowe had both failed her, after so many pretty speeches.

Still, there was a queer pleasure in being wooed by Kit: his insane notions went to one's head like wine. She would send Meg for him again to-morrow. And Pevensey was, of course, the best match imaginable. . . . No, it would be too heartless to dismiss George Bulmer outright. It was unreasonable of him to desert her because a Gascon threatened to go to mass; but, after all, she would probably marry George in the end. He was really almost unendurably silly, though, about England and freedom and religion, and right and wrong things like that. Yes, it would be tedious to have a husband who often talked to you as though he were addressing a public meeting. . . . However, he was very handsome, particularly in his highflown and most tedious moments; that year-old son of his was sickly and would probably die soon, the sweet, forlorn little pet, and not be a bother to anybody: and her dear old father would be profoundly delighted by the marriage of his daughter to a man whose wife could have at will a dozen céladon cups, and anything else she chose to ask for. . . .

But now the sun had set, and the room was growing quite dark. So Cynthia stood a-tiptoe, and replaced the mirror upon the shelves, setting it upright behind those wonderful green cups which had anew reminded her of Pevensey's wealth and generosity. She smiled a little, to think of what fun it had been to hold George back, for two whole weeks, from discharging that horrible old queen's stupid errands.

IV

Treats Philosophically of Breakage

The door opened. Stalwart young Captain Edward Musgrave came with a lighted candle, which he placed carefully upon the table in the room's centre.

He said: "They told me you were here. I come from London. I bring news for you."

"You bring no pleasant tidings, I fear——"

"As Lord Pevensey rode through the Strand this afternoon, on his way home, the Plague smote him. That is my sad news. I grieve to bring such news, for your cousin was a worthy gentleman and universally respected."

"Ah," Cynthia said, very quiet, "so Pevensey is dead. But the Plague kills quickly!"

"Yes, yes, that is a comfort, certainly. Yes, he turned quite black in the face, they report, and before his men could reach him had fallen from his horse. It was all over almost instantly. I saw him afterward, hardly a pleasant sight. I came to you as soon as I could. I was vexatiously detained——"

"So George Bulmer is dead, in a London gutter! It seems strange, because he was here, befriended by monarchs, and very strong and handsome and self-confident, hardly two hours ago. Is that his blood upon your sleeve?"

"But of course not! I told you I was vexatiously detained, almost at your gates. Yes, I had the ill luck to blunder into a disgusting business. The two rapscallions tumbled out of a doorway under my horse's very nose, egad! It was a near thing I did not ride them down. So I stopped, naturally. I regretted stopping, afterward, for I was too late to be of help. It was at the Golden Hind, of course. Something really ought to be done about that place. Yes, and that rogue Marler bled all over a new doublet, as you see. And the Deptford constables held me with their foolish interrogatories——"

"So one of the fighting men was named Marlowe! Is he dead, too, dead in another gutter?"

"Marlowe or Marler, or something of the sort—wrote plays and sonnets and such stuff, they tell me. I do not know anything about him—though, I give you my word now, those greasy constables treated me as though I were a noted frequenter of pot-houses. That sort of thing is most annoying. At all events, he was drunk as David's sow, and squabbling over, saving your presence, a woman of the sort one looks to find in that abominable hole. And so, as I was saying, this other drunken rascal dug a knife into him——"

But now, to Captain Musgrave's discomfort, Cynthia Allonby had begun to weep heartbrokenly.

So he cleared his throat, and he patted the back of her hand. "It is a great shock to you, naturally—oh, most naturally, and does you great credit. But come now, Pevensey is gone, as we must all go some day, and our tears cannot bring him back, my dear. We can but hope he is better off, poor fellow, and look on it as a mysterious dispensation and that sort of thing, my dear——"

"Oh, Ned, but people are so cruel! People will be saying that it was I who kept poor Cousin George in London this past two weeks, and that but for me he would have been in France long ago. And then the Queen, Ned!—why, that pig-headed old woman will be blaming it on me, that there is nobody to prevent that detestable French King from turning Catholic and dragging England into new wars, and I shall not be able to go to any of the court dances! nor to the masque!" sobbed Cynthia, "nor anywhere!"

"Now you talk tender-hearted and angelic nonsense. It is noble of you to feel that way, of course. But Pevensey did not take proper care of himself, and that is all there is to it. Now I have remained in London since the Plague's outbreak. I stayed with my regiment, naturally. We have had a few deaths, of course. People die everywhere. But the Plague has never bothered me. And why has it never bothered me? Simply be-

cause I was sensible, took the pains to consult an astrologer, and by his advice wear about my neck, night and day, a bag of dried toad's blood and powdered cinnamon. It is an infallible specific for men born in February. No, not for a moment do I wish to speak harshly of the dead, but sensible persons cannot but consider Lord Pevensey's death to have been caused by his own carelessness."

"Now, certainly that is true," the girl said, brightening. "It was really his own carelessness, and his dear, lovable rashness. And somebody could explain it to the Queen. Besides, I often think that wars are good for the public spirit of a nation, and bring out its true manhood. But then it upset me, too, a little, Ned, to hear about this Marlowe—for I must tell you that I knew the poor man, very slightly. So I happen to know that today he flung off in a rage, and began drinking, because somebody, almost by pure accident, had burned a packet of his verses——"

Thereupon Captain Musgrave raised heavy eyebrows, and guffawed so heartily that the candle flickered. "To think of the fellow's putting it on that plea! when he could so easily have written some more verses. That is the trouble with these poets, if you ask me: they are not practical even in their ordinary, everyday lying. No, no, the truth of it was that the rogue wanted a pretext for making a beast of himself, and seized the first that came to hand. Egad, my dear, it is a daily practice with these poets. They hardly draw a sober breath. Everybody knows that."

Cynthia was looking at him in the half-lit room with very flattering admiration. . . . Seen thus, with her scarlet lips a little parted—disclosing pearls—and with her naive dark eyes aglow, she was quite incredibly pretty and caressable. She had almost forgotten until now that this stalwart soldier, too, was in love with her. But now her spirits were rising venturously, and she knew that she liked Ned Musgrave. He had sensible notions; he saw things as they really were, and with him there would never be any nonsense about toplofty ideas. Then, too, her dear old white-haired father

would be pleased, because there was a very fair estate. . . .

So Cynthia said: "I believe you are right, Ned. I often wonder how they can be so lacking in self-respect. Oh, I am certain you must be right, for it is just what I felt without being able quite to express it. You will stay for supper with us, of course. Yes, but you must, because it is always a great comfort for me to talk with really sensible persons. I do not wonder that you are not very eager to stay, though, for I am probably a fright, with my eyes red, and with my hair all tumbling down, like an old witch's. Well, let us see what can be done about it, sir! There was a hand-mirror——"

And thus speaking, she tripped, with very much the reputed grace of a fairy, toward the far end of the room, and standing a-tiptoe, groped at the obscure shelves, with a resultant crash of falling china.

"Oh, but my lovely cups!" said Cynthia, in dismay. "I had forgotten they were up there: and now I have smashed both of them, in looking for my mirror, sir, and trying to prettify myself for you. And I had so fancied them, because they had not their like in England!"

She looked at the fragments, and then at Musgrave, with wide, innocent hurt eyes. She was honestly grieved by the loss of her quaint toys. But Musgrave, in his sturdy, common-sense way, only laughed at her seriousness over such kickshaws.

"I am for an honest earthenware tankard myself!" he said, jovially, as the two went in to supper.

THE HIGH COST OF CONSCIENCE

BY BEATRICE RAVENEL

From *Harper's Magazine*

ANY woman who can accept money from a gentleman who is in no way related to her——" Miss Fowler delivered judgment.

"My dear Aunt Maria, you mean a gentleman's disembodied spirit," Hugh's light, pleasant tones intervened.

"A legacy, Maria, is not quite the same thing." Mr. Winthrop Fowler's perfect intonation carried its usual implication that the subject was closed.

"——is what I call an adventuress," Miss Fowler summed up. She had a way of ignoring objections, of reappearing beyond them like a submarine with the ultimate and detonating answer. "And now she wants to reopen the matter when the whole thing's over and done with. After three years. Extraordinary taste." She hitched her black-velvet Voltaire arm-chair a little away from the fire and spread a vast knitting-bag of Chinese brocade over her knees. "I suppose she isn't satisfied; she wants more."

"Naturally, I cannot imagine what other reason she could have for insisting on a personal interview," her brother agreed, dryly. He retired into the *Transcript* as a Trappist withdraws into his vows. A chastened client of Mr. Fowler's once observed that a half-hour's encounter with him resulted in a rugful of asphyxiated topics.

Miss Maria, however, preferred disemboweling hers. "I shouldn't have consented," she snapped. "Hugh, if you would be so good as to sit down. You are obstructing the light. And the curtain-cord. If you could refrain from twisting it for a few moments."

Hugh let his long, high-shouldered figure lapse into the window-seat. "And besides, we're all dying to know what she looks like," he suggested.

"Speak for yourself, please," said Miss Fowler, with the vivacity of the lady who protests too much.

"I do, I do! Good Lord! I'm just as bad as the rest of you. All my life I've been consumed to know what Uncle Hugh could have seen in a perfectly obscure little person to make him do what he did. There must have been something." His eyes travelled to a sketch in pencil of a man's head which hung in the shadow of the chimneypiece, a sketch whose uncanny suggestion might have come from the quality of the sitter or merely from a smudging of the medium. "Everything he did always seemed to me perfectly natural," he went on, as though conscious of new discovery. "Even those years when he was knocking about the world, hiding his address. Even when he had that fancy that people were persecuting him. Most people did worry him horribly."

A glance flashed between the two middle-aged listeners. It was a peculiar glance, full of a half-denied portent. Then Miss Fowler's fingers, true to their traditions, loosened their grip on her needles and casually smoothed out her work.

"I have asked you not to speak of that," she mentioned, quietly.

"I know. But of course there was no doubt at all that he was sa—was entirely recovered before his death. Don't you think so, sir?"

His uncle laid down the paper and fixed the young man with the gray, unsheathed keenness that had sent so many witnesses grovelling to the naked truth. "No doubt whatever. I always held, and so did both the physicians, that his lack of balance was a temporary and sporadic thing, brought on by overwork and—and certain unhappy conditions of his life. There has never been any such taint in our branch of the family."

"No-o, so they say," Hugh agreed. "One of our forebears did see ghosts, but that was rather the fashion. And his father, that old Johnnie over the fireplace—you take after him, Aunt Maria—he was the prize witch-

smeller of his generation, and he condemned all the young and pretty ones. That hardly seems well-balanced."

"Collaterals on the distaff side," Mr. Fowler put in hastily. "If you would read Mendel——"

"Mendel? I have read about him." He raised the forefinger of his right hand. "Very suggestive. If your father was a black rabbit"—he raised the forefinger of his left—"and your mother was a white rabbit, then your male children would be"—he raised all the other fingers and paused as though taken aback by the size of the family—"would be blue guinea-pigs, with a tendency to club-foot and astigmatism, but your female children might only be rather clumsy tangoists with a weakness for cutting their poor relations. That's all I remember, but I *do* know that because I studied the charts."

"Very amusing," said Mr. Fowler, indulgently.

Hugh flushed.

"I am sure it can't be that way." Miss Maria flapped her knitting over. "But everything has changed since my day, and *not* for the better. The curtain-cord."

"Beg pardon," muttered Hugh. His mind went on churning nonsense. "There are two days it is useless to flee from—the day of your death and the day when your family doesn't care for your jokes.

> "For a joke is an intellectual thing,
> And a *mot* is the sword of an angel king.

"Good old Blake. Why do the best people always see jokes? Why does a really good one make a whole frozen crowd feel jolly and united all of a sudden?" He pondered on the beneficence of the comic spirit. Hugh was a born Deist. It gave him no trouble at all to believe that since the paintings of Velasquez and the great outdoors, which he had seen, were beautiful, so much the more beautiful must be that God whom he had not seen. It seemed reasonable. As for the horrors like Uncle Hugh's affair—well, they must be put in for chiaroscuro. A thing couldn't be all white without being blank. The

thought of the shadows, however, always made him profoundly uncomfortable, and his instinct right-about-faced to the lighter surface of life. "Anyhow," he broke silence, "the daughter of Heth must be game. Three to one, and on our native heath."

He looked appraisingly about the room, pausing at the stiff, distinguished, grey-haired couple, one on either side of the fire. The effect was of a highly finished genre picture: the rich wainscot between low bookshelves, the brooding portraits, the black-blue rug bordered by a veiled Oriental motive, the black-velvet cushions that brought out the watery reflections of old Sheraton as even the ancient horsehair had not done; the silver candlesticks, the miniatures, and on the mantel those two royal flower-pots whose precarious existence was to his aunt a very fearful joy. Even the tortoise-shell cat, sprawled between the two figures like a tiny tiger-skin, was in the picture. It was a room that gently put you into your place. Hugh recalled with a faint grin certain meetings here of philanthropic ladies whose paths had seldom turned into the interiors of older Beacon Street. The state of life to which it had pleased their Maker to call them, he reflected, would express itself preferably in gilding and vast pale-tinted upholstery and pink bibelots—oh, quite a lot of pink. This place had worried them into a condition of disconcerted awe.

He tried to fancy what it was going to do to the unbidden, resented guest. A queer protest against its enmity, an impulse to give her a square deal, surged up in him from nowhere. After all, whatever else she might be, she was Uncle Hugh's girl. Like all the world, Hugh loved the dispossessed lover. He knew what it felt like. One does not reach the mature age of twenty-four without having at least begun the passionate pilgrimage. His few tindery and tinselly affairs he uneasily suspected of following the obvious formula: three parts curiosity, three parts the literary sense, three parts crude young impulse, one part distilled moonshine. The real love of his life had been Uncle Hugh.

He sprang up with an abruptness to which his elders seemed to be used. He stopped before a brass-trimmed

desk and jerked at the second drawer. "Where are those letters, sir?"

"You mean——"

"Yes, the one you wrote her about the money, and her answer. You put them with his papers, didn't you? Where's the key?"

The older man drew from his waistcoat pocket a carved bit of brass. "What do you want with them?" he asked, cautiously.

"I want to refresh my memory—and Aunt Maria's." He took out a neat little pile of papers and began to sort them intently. "Here they are on top." He laid out a docketed envelope on the desk. "And here are the essays and poems that you wouldn't publish. I considered them the best things he ever did."

"You were not his literary executor," said his uncle, coldly. Another stifled glance passed between the seniors, but this time Miss Maria made no effort to restore the gloss of the surface. She sat idle, staring at the papers with a sort of horror.

"Put them back," she said. "Winthrop, I do think you might burn them. If you keep things like that too long the wrong people are sure to get them."

"Wait a bit. I haven't seen them for years, not since you published the collected works—with Hamlet left out." The young man lifted a worn brown-morocco portfolio tied with a frazzled red ribbon. "And here"—his voice dropped—"here is It—the letters he wrote to her and never sent. It was a sort of diary, wasn't it, going on for years? What a howling pity we couldn't print that!"

"Hugh!"

"Don't faint, Aunt Maria. You wouldn't catch me doing anything so indecent. But suppose Dante's dear family had suppressed the *Vita Nuova*. And it ought to be one of the most extraordinary human documents in the world, perfectly intimate, all the bars down, full of those flashes of his. Just the man, *ipsissimus*, that never happened but that once. Uncle Winthrop, don't you think that I might read it?"

"Do you think so? I never did."

"Oh, if you put it up to me like that! Of course I

can't. But what luck that he didn't ask you to send it to her—supposing she's the wrong kind—wasn't it . . ." His voice trailed off, leaving his lips foolishly open. "You don't mean—he did?"

"Yes, at the end, after you had left the room," said Mr. Fowler, firmly.

"And you—didn't? Why not?"

"As you said, for fear she was the wrong kind."

"It was too much to hope that she would be anything else," his aunt broke in, harshly. "Shut your mouth, Hugh; you look like a fool. Think what she might have done with them—she and some of those unspeakable papers."

"Oh, I see! I see!" groaned the young man. "But how awful not to do the very last thing he wanted! Did you ever try to find out what kind of a person she was?"

"She took the money. That was enough," cried Miss Fowler. "She got her share, just as though she had been his legal wife."

Hugh gave her a dazed look. "You don't mean that she was his illegal one? I never——"

"Oh no, no!" Mr. Fowler interposed. "We have no reason to think that she was otherwise than respectable. Maria, you allow most unfortunate implications to result from your choice of words. We know very little, really."

"He met her in Paris when he gave that course of lectures over there. We know that much. And she was an American student—from Virginia, wasn't it? But that was over twenty years ago. Didn't he see her after that?"

"I am sure he did not."

"She wasn't with him when he was knocking about Europe?"

"Certainly not. She came home that very year and married. As her letter states, she was a widow with three children at the time of his death."

"I have always considered it providential that he didn't know she was a widow," observed Miss Maria, primly.

Her nephew shot her a look that admitted his intermittent amusement in his aunt Maria, but definitely gave

her up. He carefully leaned the portfolio inside the arm of the sofa that neighboured the desk, and picked up the long envelope.

"A copy of my letter," said Mr. Fowler.

To his sister, watching him as he watched Hugh, came the unaccountable impression that his sure and chiselled surface covered a nervous anxiety. Then Miss Maria, being a product of the same school, dismissed the idea as absurd.

Hugh raised bewildered eyes from the letters. "I can't exactly remember," he said. "I was so cut up at the time. Did I ever actually read this before or was I merely told about it? I went back for Midyear's, you know, almost at once. I know my consent was asked, but——"

"You—did not see it."

"And you, Aunt Maria, of course you knew about it!"

"Certainly," said Miss Fowler, on the defensive. "As usual in business matters, your uncle decided for me. We have been accustomed to act as a family always. To me the solidarity of the family it more than the interest of any member of it."

"Oh, I know that the Fowler family is the noblest work of God." The young man looked from one to the other as he might have regarded two strangers whose motives it was his intention to find out. "I've been brought up on that. But what I want to know now is the whyness of this letter."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Fowler's voice cut the pause like a trowel executing the middle justice on an earthworm.

"Why—why——" Hugh began, desperately. "I mean, why wasn't the money turned over to her at once—all of it?"

"It is customary to notify legatees."

"And she wasn't even a legatee," added Miss Maria, grimly. "He never made a will."

"No," said Hugh, with an ugly laugh, "he merely trusted to our promises."

There was a brief but violent silence.

"I think, Winthrop," Miss Maria broke it, "that, instead of questioning the propriety of my language, you might do well to consider your nephew's."

Hugh half-tendered the letter. "You're so confoundedly clever, Uncle Winthrop. You—you just put the whole thing up to the poor woman. I can't pick out a word to show where you said it, but the tone of your letter is exactly this, 'Here's the money for you, and if you take it you're doing an unheard-of thing.' *She* saw it right enough. Her answer is just defence of why she has to take it—some of it. She's a mother with three children, struggling to keep above water. She's a human animal fighting for her young. So she takes, most apologetically, most unhappily, a part of what he left her, and she hates to take that. It's the most pitiful thing——"

"Piteous," corrected Miss Maria, in a tone like a bite.

Mr. Fowler laid the tips of his fingers very delicately on his nephew's knee. "Will you show me the place or places where I make these very damaging observations?"

"That's just it. I can't pick them out, but——"

"I am sure that you cannot, because they exist only in your somewhat—shall we say, lyrical imagination? I said the circumstances before the woman and she acted as she saw fit to act. Hugh, my dear boy, I wish that you would try to restrain your—your growing tendency to excitability. I know that this is a trying day for all of us."

"O Lord, yes! It brings it all back," said Hugh, miserably. "I'm sorry if I said anything offensive, sir, but——" He gave it up. "You know I have a devil, sometimes." He gave a half-embarrassed laugh.

"Offensive—if you have said anything offensive?" Miss Fowler boiled over. "Is that all you are going to say, Winthrop? If so——"

Mr. Fowler lifted a warning hand. The house door was opening. Then the discreet steps of Gannett came up the hall, followed by something lighter and more resilient.

"At least don't give me away to the lady the very

first thing," said Hugh, lightly. He shoved the papers into the drawer and swung it shut. His heart was beating quite ridiculously. He would know at last—— What wouldn't he know? "Uncle Hugh's girl, Uncle Hugh's girl," he told himself, and his temperamental responsiveness to the interest and the mystery of life expanded like a sea-anemone in the Gulf Stream.

Gannett opened the door, announced in his impeccable English, "Mrs. Shirley," and was not.

A very small, very graceful woman hesitated in the doorway. Hugh's first impression was surprise that there was so little of her. Then his always alert subconsciousness registered:

"A lady, yes, but a country lady; not *de par le monde*. Pleasantly rather than well dressed; those veils are out." He had met her at once with outstretched hand and the most cordial, "I am glad to see you, Mrs. Shirley." Then he mentioned the names of his aunt and uncle. He did not dare to leave anything to Aunt Maria.

That lady made a movement that might or might not have been a gesture of recognition. Mr. Fowler, who had risen, inclined his handsome head with a polite murmur and indicated a chair which faced the light. Mrs. Shirley sat, instead, upon the edge of the sofa, which happened to be nearer. With her coming Hugh's expansiveness had suffered a sudden rebuff. A feeling of dismal conventionality permeated the room like a fog. He plumbed it in vain for the wonder and the magic that ought to have been the inescapable aura of Uncle Hugh's girl. Was this the mighty ocean, was this all? She was a little nervous, too. That was a pity. Nervousness in social relations was one of the numerous things that Aunt Maria never forgave.

Then the stranger spoke, and Hugh's friendliness went out to the sound as to something familiar for which he had been waiting.

"It is very good of you to let me come," she said.

"But she must be over forty," Hugh told himself, "and her voice is young. So was his always." It was also very natural and moving and not untinged by what

Miss Fowler called the Southern patois. "And her feet are young."

Mr. Fowler uttered another polite murmur. There was no help from that quarter. She made another start.

"It seemed to me——" she addressed Miss Fowler, who looked obdurate. She cast a helpless glance at the cat, who opened surprising topaz eyes and looked supercilious. Then she turned to Hugh. "It seemed to me," she said, steadily, "that I could make you understand—I mean I could express myself more clearly if I could see you, than I could by writing, but—it is rather difficult."

The overheated, inclement room waited. Hugh restrained his foot from twitching. Why didn't Aunt Maria say something? She was behaving abominably. She was still seething with her suppressed outburst like a teakettle under the cozy of civilization. And it was catching.

"I explained at the time, three years ago," Mrs. Shirley made the plunge, "why I took the—money at all." The hard word was out, and Hugh relaxed. "I don't know what you thought of me, but at the time it seemed like the mercy of Heaven. I had to educate the children. We were horribly poor. I was almost in despair. And I felt that if I could take it from any one I could take it from him . . ."

"Yes," said Hugh, unhappily. The depression that dropped on him at intervals seemed waiting to pounce. He glanced at his uncle's judicial mask, knowing utterly the distaste for sentimental encounters that it covered. He detested his aunt's aloofness. He was almost angry with this little woman's ingenuousness that put her so candidly at their cynical mercy.

"But now," she went on, "some land we have that seemed worth nothing at the time has become very valuable. The town grew out in that direction. And my eldest boy is doing very well indeed, and my daughter is studying for a library position."

"The short and simple annals of the poor," sighed Hugh to Hugh.

"And so," said little Mrs. Shirley, with astounding

simplicity, "I came to ask you please to take it back again." She gave an involuntary sigh of relief, as though she had returned a rather valuable umbrella. Mr. Fowler's eyeglasses dropped from his nose as his eyebrows shot up.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Miss Maria with all the unexpectedness of Galatea. "You don't really mean it?" Her bag slid to the floor and the cat became thoroughly intrigued.

"Do I understand you to say"—Mr. Fowler's voice was almost stirred—"that you wish to return my brother's legacy to the family?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Shirley, "only, it wasn't a legacy. It was merely kindness that let me have it. You never can know how kind it was. But we can get on without it now."

Mr. Fowler cleared his throat. To Hugh his manner faintly suggested the cat busy with the yarn, full of a sort of devout curiosity. "Pardon me," he said, gently, "but are you sure—have you given this matter sufficient thought? The sum is a considerable one. Your children——"

"I have talked it over with them. They feel just as I do."

"A very proper feeling," said Miss Fowler, approvingly. "I must say that I never expected it. I shall add part of my share of it to the Marian Fowler Ward in the Home for Deficient Children. A most worthy charity. Perhaps I could interest you——"

"Oh, that would be lovely!" cried Mrs. Shirley. "Anything for children. . . . I've already spoken to my cousin, who is a lawyer, about transferring the securities back to you."

"I shall communicate with him at once," said Mr. Fowler. His court-room manner had bourgeoned into his best drawing-room blend of faintly implied gallantry and deep consideration. One almost caught Winter getting out of the lap of Spring. Then the three heads which had unconsciously leaned together suddenly straightened up and turned in the same direction.

Hugh stood almost over them. In one hand he held

is aunt's knitting, which he had mechanically rescued
rom the cat. Now he drew out one of the ivory needles
nd snapped it into accurate halves. "This is atrocious!"
e said, with care and precision. His voice shook. "I
ail not touch a cent of it and"—he embraced his uncle
nd aunt in the same devastating look—"neither will
ou if you have any sense of decency."

"I think——"

"It doesn't matter remotely what you—we think, sir.
What matters is what Uncle Hugh thought." He turned
o Mrs. Shirley with an extraordinary softening of tone.
Couldn't you keep it? When he died . . . in the room
ver this"—with a little gasp her glance flew to the ceil-
ng as though this topographical detail had brought her
sharp realization of that long-past scene—"he made
s promise that you should have it, all of it. He felt
hat you needed it; he worried about it."

"Oh, how kind of him—how kind!" cried the little
oman. The poignancy of her voice cut into his dis-
ppointment like a sharp ray of light. "Even then—
o think of me. But don't you understand that he
ouldn't want me to—to take anything that I felt I ought
ot to take?"

"That's the way out," rippled across Mr. Fowler's
ace. He was experiencing a variety of mental disturb-
nces, but this came to the surface just in time for Hugh
o catch it.

"Oh, well," he murmured, wearily. "Only, none for
his deficient child, thank you." He walked to the win-
ow and stood looking out into the blown spring green
f the elm opposite. His ebbed anger had left a residuum
f stubbornness. There was still an act of justice to be
nsummated and the position of grand-justicer offered
certain righteous attraction. As he reminded himself,
you put your will to work on a difficult action you were
ain to commit, after a while the will worked automati-
ally and your mind functioned without aid from you,
nd the action bloomed of itself. This kinetic process
as a constant device of the freakish impulse that he
illed his devil. He deliberately laid the train.

"There is one more thing," the alien was saying. Her

voice had gained a wonderful fluency amid the general thaw. "I didn't dare to ask before, but if he thought of me then—— I have always hoped he left some message for me . . . a letter, perhaps."

Hugh smiled agreeably. "In just a moment," he considered, "I am going to do something so outrageous that I can't even imagine how my dear families are going to take it." He was about to hurt them severely, but that was all right. His uncle was a tempered weapon of war that despised quarter; and as for Aunt Maria, he rather wanted to hurt Aunt Maria for her own good.

Into the eloquent and mendacious silence that was a gift of their caste the voice fell humbly: "So there wasn't? I suppose I oughtn't to have expected it."

"Any time now, Gridley," Hugh signalled to his familiar. Like a response, a thin breeze tickled the roots of his hair. He swung around with the pivot of a definite purpose. With an economy of movement that would have contented an efficiency expert he set a straight fiddle-backed chair squarely in front of Uncle Hugh's girl and settled himself in it with his back to his own people.

"Mrs. Shirley," he began, quietly, "will you talk to me, please? I hope I shan't startle you, but there are things I absolutely have to know, and this is my one chance. I am entirely determined not to let it slip. Talk to me, please, not to them. As you have doubtless noticed, though excellent people where the things not flatly of this world are concerned, my uncle is a graven image and my aunt is a deaf mute. As for me, I am just unbalanced enough to understand anything." He was aware of the rustle of consternation behind him and hurried on, ignoring that and whatever else might be happening there. "That's what I'm banking on now. I intend to say my say and they are going to allow it, because it is dangerous to thwart queer people—very dangerous indeed. You know, they thwarted Uncle Hugh in every possible way. My grandfather was a composite of those two, and all of them adored my uncle and contradicted him and watched him until he went over the border. And they're so dead scared that I'm

going to follow him some day that they let me do quite as I please." He passed his hand across his eyes as though brushing away cobwebs. "Will you be so good as to put your veil up."

"Why—why, certainly!" Mrs. Shirley faltered. She uncovered her face and Hugh nodded to the witness within.

"Yes, he'd have liked that," he told himself. "Lots of expression and those beautiful haunted shadows about the eyes." He laughed gently. "Don't look so frightened. I don't bite. Just humour me, as Uncle Winthrop is signalling you to do. You understand, don't you, that Uncle Hugh was the romance and the adventure of my life? I'm still saturated with him, but there was lots of him that I could never get through to. There never was a creature better worth knowing, and he couldn't show me, or else I had blind spots. There were vast tracts of undiscovered country in him, as far as I was concerned—lands of wonder, east of the sun and west of the moon—that sort of thing. But I knew that there was a certain woman who must have been there, who held the heart of the mystery, and to-day, when this incredible chance came—when you came—I made up my mind that I was not going to be restrained nor baffled by the customs of my tribe. I want the truth and I'm prepared to give it. From the shoulder. If you will tell me everything you know about him I promise to tell you everything I know. You'll want to——" The sound of the closing door made him turn. The room behind him was empty. His manner quieted instantly. "That's uncommonly tactful of them. . . . You won't think that they meant any discourtesy by leaving?" he added, anxiously. "They wouldn't do that."

"Oh, I'm sure not! Your uncle made me understand," faltered Mrs. Shirley. "They knew you could speak more freely without them."

"He's wonderful with the wireless," Hugh agreed. "But they were in terror, anyway, as to how freely I was about to speak before them. They can't stand this. Everything really human seems pretty well alien to Uncle

Winthrop. He's exhibit A of the people who consider civilization a mistake. And my aunt Maria is a truly good woman—charities and all that—but if you put a rabbit in her brain it would incontinently curl up and die in convulsions."

She laughed helplessly, and Hugh reported an advance.

"Nevertheless," he added quaintly, "we don't really dislike each other."

"They love you above everything."

"I'm the last of the family, you see; I'm the future. . . . Can't we skip the preliminaries?" he broke out. "You don't feel that I am a stranger, do you?" He halted on the verge of the confidence that he found no barrier in her advanced age. He knew plenty of women of forty who had never grown up much and who met him on perfectly equal terms. This, however, was a case by itself. He plunged back into the memories of Uncle Hugh. He spoke of his charm, his outlook on life, sometimes curiously veiled, often uncannily clairvoyant; his periods of restless suffering tending to queer, unsocial impulses; then the flowering of an interval of hard work and its reward of almost supernatural joy.

"He used to go around in a rainbow," said Hugh, "a sort of holy soap bubble. I hardly dared to speak to him for fear of breaking it. It came with a new inspiration, and while it lasted nothing on earth was so important. Then when it was finished he never wanted to see the thing again."

"Go on," said his listener. Her grey eyes plumbed his with a child's directness. He was conscious of his will playing on her. He was keeping his part of the contract, but he was also breaking the way for hers. He must not let them go for a moment, those grey eyes like a girl's that grew absent-minded so easily. Only a little more and his mood would curve around both them, a glamorous mist of feeling.

"You go on," he murmured. "Can't you see how much I want you to? Can't you feel how much I'm the right person to know?"

"I could never tell any one. You want——"

"Anything, everything. You must have known him better than anybody in the world did."

"I think so," she said, slowly. "And I saw him alone only twice in my life."

For some time he had sat with his long fingers over his mouth, afraid of checking her by an untimely word.

"Of course I was in his classes. You know he had an extraordinary success; he struck twelve at once, as they say there. The French really discovered him as a poet, just as Mallarmé discovered Poe; some of them used that parallel. And the girls—he was a matinée idol and a cult—even the French girls. We went into that classroom thrilling as we never went to any ball. I worked that winter for him harder than I had ever worked in my life, and about Easter he began to single me out for the most merciless fault-finding. That was his way of showing that he considered you worth while. He had a habit of standing over you in class, holding your paper like a knout. And once or twice—I called myself a conceited little idiot—but once or twice——"

Hugh nodded. His pulses were singing like morning stars at the spectacle of a new world.

"He used to say of a certain excited, happy feeling, I sort of fey feeling, that you seemed to have swallowed a heavenly pigeon. And—well, he looked like that. But he knocked my vanity on the head and told it, 'Down to the other dogs.' I was used to young men; I knew how little such manifestations could mean. But after that he used to set little lines in the things I wrote for him, very delicately, and sometimes I fancied I had caught a fish. It was most exciting."

Hugh again impersonated a Chinese mandarin.

"You see, he allowed so few people to know him, to move with such difficulty in that formally laid-out, small, professional world, with its endless leaving of cards and showing yourself on the proper days. I think they considered him a sort of Huron afflicted with genius, and forgave him. He ran away from them, he fought them off. And to feel that there was a magic spider-web between this creature and me, new every day and

invisible to everybody else and dripping with poetry like dewdrops! Can't you fancy the intoxication? I was nineteen. . . . I had engaged myself to be married to Beverly Shirley. I had known him all my life—before I left home—but I had absolutely no conviction of disloyalty. This was different; this was another life."

"Another you," agreed Hugh, as one who took exotic states of mind for granted.

"Well, yes. . . . It was one of those awful at-homes of Madame Normand's. She took American girls *en pension,* and she was supposed to look after us severely; but as she was an American herself, of course she gave us a great deal of liberty. She was the wife of a *professeur,* and she had rather an imposing *salon,* so she received just so often, and you had to go or she never stopped asking you why. You have been to those French receptions?"

"Where they serve music and syrup and little hard cakes, and you carry away the impression of a lordly function because of the scenery and the manners? Indeed yes!"

"I slid away after a while, out upon the iron balcony, filled with new lilacs, that overhung the garden. Something had hurt my little feelings; a letter hadn't come, perhaps. I remember how dark and warm the night was, like a gulf under me, and the stars and the lights of Paris seemed very much alike and rather disappointing. Then I heard his voice behind me, and I was as overwhelmed as—as Daphne or Danaë or one of those pagan ladies might have been when the god came.

"He said, 'What are you doing, hanging over this dark, romantic chasm?' And I just had presence of mind enough to play up.

"'Naturally, I'm wailing for a phantom lover.' Then the answer to that flashed on me and I said in a hurry, 'I thought you never came to these things.'

"'I came to see you'—he really said it—and then, 'And—am I sufficiently demoniacal?' And he *had* swallowed a pigeon.

"'Oh dear, no!' said I. 'You are much too respectable. You are from Boston.'

"'And you from Virginia," said he. 'I hear that a certain Stewart once unjustifiably claimed kinship with your branch of the family and has since been known as the Pretender.'

"'That is quite true,' said I. 'And I hear that once when the Ark ran aground a little voice was heard piping: 'Save me! save me! I am a Fowler of Boston!'

"That was the silly way we began. Isn't it incredible?"

"He could be silly—that was one of the lovable things," Hugh mused. "And he could say the most nakedly natural things. But he generally used the mandarin dialect. He thought in it, I suppose."

"No," the stranger corrected him. "He thought in thoughts. Brilliant people always do. The words just wait like a—a——"

"Layette," said Hugh. "What else did he say?"

"The next I remember we were leaning together, all but touching. And he was telling me about the little green gate."

Hugh's hand shut. "He always called it that. Was he thinking of it even then?"

"Oh yes!"

"He never was like a person of this world," said Hugh, under his breath.

"The loneliest creature I ever knew."

They fell silent, like two old friends whose sorrow is the same.

"He believed," Hugh went on, after a moment, "that when life became intolerable you had a perfect right to take the shortest way out. And he thought of it as a little green gate, swinging with its shadow in the twilight, so that a touch would let you into the sweetest, dimmest old garden."

"But he loved life."

"Sometimes. The colour of it and the unexpectedness. He believed the world didn't have any definite plan, but just wandered along the road and picked up adventures. And he loved that. He said God made a new earth every day and he rather fancied a new heaven

oftener. But he got so dead tired at the end, homesick for underground. . . . I wonder . . ."

The little woman was looking past him, straight into an evocation of a vanished presence that was so real, so nearly tangible, that Hugh was forced to lay violent hands upon his absurd impulse to glance over his shoulder. "I wouldn't let him," she said, in a tone the young man had never heard before.

"You mean . . ."

"I couldn't bear it. I made him promise me that he wouldn't. I can't tell you that. We talked for a long time, and the night was full of doom. He was tired then, but that wasn't all. He felt what was coming—the Shadow . . . and he was in terror. What he dreaded most was that it might change him in some way, make him something beastly and devilish—he who had always loved whatever was lovely and merciful and of good report."

Hugh got up with a shudder. "Hush!" he said, sharply. "It's too ghastly. Don't tell me any more about it." He wandered across the room, pulling a leaf from the azaleas, stopping at the window for a long look out. The wind was blowing some riotous young clouds over the sky like inarticulate shouts. There was an arrogant bird in the elm; there were pert crocus-buds in the window-boxes. The place was full of foolhardy little dare-devils who trusted their fate and might never find it out. After all, that was the way to live—as long as one was allowed. He turned suddenly with his whimsical smile. "I look out o' window quite a bit," he explained, "well, because of my aunt Maria." When he sat down again in the Sheraton chair Mrs. Shirley shifted her story to the plane of the smile.

"I don't know how late it was when Madame Normand popped her head out of the balcony door."

"'Who was then surprised? It was the lady,' as dear old Brantome says?"

"It was everybody. The company had gone and Mélanie the *bonne* was putting out the candles.

"'Miss Stewart and I have just discovered that we are very nearly related,' said he.

"'But how delightful,' said Madame, thoroughly annoyed."

"And the other time," Hugh hinted. What he wanted to say was, "So you prevented it, you kept him here, God bless you!" His natural resilience had asserted itself. Vistas were opening. The Hugh who accepted life for what it was worth was again in the ascendant, but he found a second to call up the other Hugh, whose legal residence was somewhere near the threshold of consciousness, to take notice. He had always known that there must have been something in Uncle Hugh's girl.

"That was a few days later, the afternoon before I left Paris. I went quite suddenly. Somebody was sick at home, and I had the chance to travel with some friends who were going. He had sent me flowers—no, not roses."

"Narcissus?"

"Yes. Old Monsieur Normand was scandalized; it seems one doesn't send yellow flowers to a *jeune fille*. To me it was the most incredibly thoughtful and original thing. All the other girls had gone with Madame to a very special piano recital, in spite of a drizzling rain. It had turned cool, too, I remember, because there was a wood fire in the little sitting-room—not the *salon*, but the girls' room. Being an American, Madame was almost lavish about fires. And it was a most un-French room, the most careless little place, where the seconds piano lived, and the lilacs, when they were taken in out of the cold. There were sweet old curtains, and a long sofa in front of the fireplace instead of the traditional armchairs. Anybody's books and bibelots lay about. I was playing."

"What?" This was important.

"What would a girl play, over twenty years ago, in Paris? In the *crépuscule*, with the lilacs that *embaument*, as they say there, and with a sort of panic in her mind? Because, after all, the man to whom one is engaged is a man whom one knows very slightly."

"Absolutely," said Hugh.

"And I didn't want to leave Paris. . . . Of course I

was playing Chopin bits, with an ache in my heart to match, that I couldn't bear and was enjoying to the utmost. What do girls play now? Then all of us had attacks of Chopin. Madame used to laugh and say, 'I hear the harbour bar still moaning,' and order that particular girl's favourite dessert. She spoiled us. And Monsieur would say something about *si jeunesse savait*. He was a nice old man, not very successful; his colleagues patronized him. Oh yes, he was obvious!

"And then Mélanie opened the door and announced, '*Monsieur, le cousin de Mademoiselle.*' I don't know what made her do it except a general wish to be kind. She remembered from the other night, and, besides, she hated to attempt English names; she made salmi of them."

Hugh had ceased to hold her eyes long ago. They looked into the window's square of light. He had no wish to intrude his presence. She was finding it natural to tell him, just as he had acknowledged her right to explore the intimate places of his soul. Things simply happened that way sometimes, and one was humbly thankful.

"'Go on,' he said. 'Don't stop.' He sat in a corner of the sofa, and for a while the impetus of my start carried me on. Then the bottom dropped out of Chopin. I went over and sat in the other corner. It was a long sofa; it felt as long as the world.

"Do you remember that heart-breakingly beautiful voice of his that could make you feel anything he was feeling? It was like magic. He said at last:

"'So you are going home to be married?'

"I nodded.

"'Betty,' he said, 'are you happy, quite happy, about —everything?'

"'Oh yes!" I said. 'Oh yes, Professor Fowler!' The curious thing about it was that I spoke the truth, when I considered it seriously.

"He said, 'Then that's all right.' Then he laughed a little and said, 'Do you always call me Professor Fowler, even when you shut your door on the world at night and are all alone with God and the silence?'

"'And Claudia Jones,' I added, stupidly.

"He considered that seriously and said, 'I didn't know about Claudia Jones; she may inhibit even the silence and the other ingredient. I suppose you call me Teacher.'

"I cried out at that. 'I might call you *cher maître*, as they do her.'

"He said, 'That may do for the present.'

"We looked into the fire and the lilacs filled the pause as adequately as Chopin could have done. All at once he got up and came over to me—it seemed the most natural thing in the world—across that wilderness of sofa.

"'I suppose,' he said, 'that you won't let me off that promise.'

"'No, no!' I cried, all my old panic flooding over me again. I threw my hands out, and suddenly he had caught them in his and was holding me half away from him, and he was saying, in that tragic voice of his:

"'No, no! But give me something to make it bearable.'"

"Allah, the compassionate!" sighed Hugh, in ecstasy. He had never dared hope for all this. His very being went on tiptoe for fear of breathing too loud.

"We sat there for ages and ages, gazing into the fire, not saying a word. Then he spoke . . . every now and then. He said:

"'The horrible thing would have been never to have known you. Now that I've touched you I'm magnetized for life. I can't lose you again.'

"'It isn't I,' I told him. 'It's only what you think me.'

"'You are the only creature outside of myself that I ever found myself in,' he said. 'And I could look into you like Narcissus until I died. You are home and Nirvana. That's what you are. When I look at you I believe in God. You gallantest, most foolhardy, little, fragile thing, you, you're not afraid of anything. You trust this rotten life, don't you? You expect to find lovely things everywhere, and you will, just because they'll spring up around your feet. You'll save your world like all redeemers simply by being in it.'

"No woman ever had such things said to her as he said to me. But most of the time we said nothing. There wasn't any past or future; there was only the touch of his shoulder and his hands all around mine. It was like coming in out of the cold; it was like being on a hill above the sea, and listening to the wind in the pines until you don't know which is the wind and which is you. . . .

"It couldn't last forever. After a while something like a little point of pain began worrying my mind.

"'But there won't be . . . This is good-bye,' I cried.

"'Don't you believe it,' he said. 'God Himself couldn't make us say good-bye again.' He got up and drew me with him. It was quite dark now except for the fire, and his eyes . . . they were like those of the Djinns who were made out of elemental fire instead of earth. 'You'll come to me in the blessed sunshine,' he said, 'and in music, and in the best impulses of my own soul. If I were an old-fashioned lover I should promise to wait for you in heaven. . . . Betty, Betty, I have you in heaven now and forever!' . . . I felt his cheek on mine. Then he was gone. That was all; that was every bit of all."

"And he had that to live on for the rest of his life." Hugh broke the silence under his breath. "Well, thank God he had *something!*"

The little woman fumbled in her bag for a handkerchief and shamelessly dried her eyes. As she moved, a brown object fell from the corner of the couch across her lap. Hugh held his hand out for the morocco portfolio.

"It seems to have the homing instinct," he observed; then, abruptly, "Wait a moment; I'm going to call them back." He paused, as usual, before his favourite confidant, the window. "The larger consciousness, the Universal Togetherness," he muttered. "I really believe he must have touched it that once. O Lord! how——" His spacious vocabulary gave it up.

When he followed his uncle and aunt into the room Mrs. Shirley came forward, her thin veil again covering her face.

"I must go," she said. "Thank you once more for letting me come."

With a curious young touch of solemnity Hugh laid the brown case in her hands. "This belongs to you," he said, "and I wanted them to see you receive it."

"And you intend to permit this, Winthrop?"

Miss Fowler turned on her brother. She had suppressed her emotions before the intruder; she had even said some proper things without unduly speeding the parting guest. But if you can't be hateful to your own family, to whom, in the name of the domestic pieties, can you be hateful?

Mr. Fowler swiveled on her the glassy eye of one who does not suffer fools gladly. "I permit anything," he responded, icily, "that will keep that boy . . . sane." He retired anew behind the monastic newspaper and rattled it.

Miss Maria received a sudden chill apprehension that Winthrop was looking much older lately. "But——" she faltered. Then she resolutely returned to the baiting. "I suppose you recall her saying that she has a daughter. Probably," admitted Miss Maria, grudgingly, "an attractive daughter."

"'It might be a very good thing," said the world-weary voice, and left her gasping. "Two excellent Virginia families." He faced his sister's appalled expression. "He might do something much more impossible—marry a cheap actress or go into a monastery. His behaviour to-day prepares me for anything. And"—a note of difficulty came into what Hugh had once called his uncle's chiselled voice—"you do not appear to realize, Maria, that what Mrs. Shirley has done is rather a remarkable thing, a thing that you and I, with our undoubted appreciation of the value of money, should probably have felt that we could not afford to do."

Hugh came in blithely, bringing a spring-smelling whiff of outdoors with him. "I got her a taxi," he announced, "and she asked me to come down to their place for Easter. There's a hunting club. Oh, cheer up, Aunt Maria! At least she left the money behind."

"Look at my needle!" cried the long-suffering lady. "*You* did that. I must say, Hugh, I find your conduct most disrespectful."

"All right, I grovel," Hugh agreed, pleasantly. He picked up the cat and rubbed her tenderly the wrong way.

"As for the money, I don't see how her conscience could have allowed her to accept everything. And she married somebody else, too."

"So did Dante's girl. That doesn't seem to make all the difference. Conscience?" Hugh went on, absently. "Conscience? Haven't I heard that word somewhere before? You are the only person I know, Aunt Maria, who has a really good, staunch, weather-proof one, because, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it altereth not."

"I should hope not, indeed," said Miss Fowler, half mollified.

Hugh smiled sleepily. The cat opened one yellow eye and moved mystified whiskers. She profoundly distrusted this affectionate young admirer. Was she being stroked the wrong way or ruffled the right way?

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright," murmured Hugh. "Puzzle, Kitty: find the Adventuress."

THE KITCHEN GODS

By G. F. ALSOP

From *Century Magazine*

THE lilies bloomed that day. Out in the courtyard, in their fantastic green-dragoned pots, one by one the tiny, ethereal petals opened. Dong-Yung went rapturously among them, stooping low to inhale their faint fragrance. The square courtyard, guarded on three sides by the wings of the house, facing the windowless blank wall on the fourth, was mottled with sunlight. Just this side of the wall a black shadow, as straight and opaque as the wall itself, banded the court with darkness; but on the hither side, where the lilies bloomed and Dong-Yung moved among them, lay glittering, yellow sunlight. The little box of a house where the gate-keeper lived made a bulge in the uniform blackness of the wall and its shadow. The two tall poles, with the upturned baskets, the devil-catches, rose like flagstaffs from both sides of the door. A huge china griffon stood at the right of the gate. From beyond the wall came the sounds of early morning—the click of wooden sandals on cobbled streets and the panting cries of the coolies bringing in fresh vegetables or carrying back to the denuded land the refuse of the city. The gate-keeper was awake, brushing out his house with a broom of twigs. He was quite bald, and the top of his head was as tanned and brown as the legs of small summer children.

"Good morning, Honourable One," he called. "It is a good omen. The lilies have opened."

An amah, blue-trousered, blue-jacketed, blue-aproned, fluttered across the courtyard with two pails of steaming water.

"Good morning, Honourable One. The water for the great wife is hot and heavy." She dropped her buckets,

the water splashing over in runnels and puddles at her feet, and stooped to smell the lilies. "It is an auspicious day."

From the casement-window in the right balcony a voice called:

"Thou dunce! Here I am waiting already half the day. Quicker! quicker!"

It sounded elderly and querulous, a voice accustomed to be obeyed and to dominate. The great wife's face appeared a moment at the casement. Her eyes swept over the courtyard scene—over the blooming lilies, and Dong-Yung standing among them.

"Behold the small wife, cursed of the gods!" she cried in her high, shrill voice. "Not even a girl can she bear her master. May she eat bitterness all her days!"

The amah shouldered the steaming buckets and splashed across the bare boards of the ancestral hall beyond.

"The great wife is angry," murmured the gate-keeper. "Oh, Honourable One, shall I admit the flower-girl? She has fresh orchids."

Dong-Yung nodded. The flower girl came slowly in under the guarded gateway. She was a country child, with brown cheeks and merry eyes. Her shallow basket was steadied by a ribbon over one shoulder, and caught between an arm and a swaying hip. In the flat, round basket, on green little leaves, lay the wired perfumed orchids.

"How many? It is an auspicious day. See, the lilies have bloomed. One for the hair and two for the buttonholes. They smell sweet as the breath of heaven itself."

Dong-Yung smiled as the flower-girl stuck one of the fragrant, fragile, green-striped orchids in her hair, and hung two others, caught on delicate loops of wire, on the jade studs of her jacket, buttoned on the right shoulder.

"Ah, you are beautiful-come-death!" said the flower-girl. "Great happiness be thine!"

"Even a small wife can be happy at times." Dong-

Yung took out a little woven purse, and paid over two coppers apiece to the flower-girl.

At the gate the girl and the gate-keeper fell a-talking.

"Is the morning rice ready?" called a man's voice from the room behind.

Dong-Yung turned quickly. Her whole face changed. It had been smiling and pleased before at the sight of the faint, white lily-petals and the sunlight on her feet and the fragrance of the orchids in her hair; but now it was lit with an inner radiance.

"My beloved Master!" Dong-Yung made a little instinctive gesture toward the approaching man, which in a second was caught and curbed by Chinese etiquette. Dressed, as she was, in pale-gray satin trousers, loose, and banded at the knee with wide blue stripes, and with a soft jacket to match, she was as beautiful in the eyes of the approaching man as the newly opened lilies. What he was in her eyes it would be hard for any modern woman to grasp: that rapture of adoration, that bliss of worship, has lingered only in rare hearts and rarer spots on the earth's surface.

Foh-Kyung came out slowly through the ancestral hall. The sunlight edged it like a bright border. The doors were wide open, and Dong-Yung saw the decorous rows of square chairs and square tables set rhythmically along the walls, and the covered dais at the head for the guest of honour. Long crimson scrolls, sprawled with gold ideographs, hung from ceiling to floor. A rosewood cabinet, filled with vases, peach bloom, imperial yellow, and turquoise blue, gleamed like a lighted lamp in the shadowy morning light of the room.

Foh-Kyung stooped to smell the lilies.

"They perfume the very air we breathe. Little Jewel, I love our old Chinese ways. I love the custom of the lily-planting and the day the lilies bloom. I love to think the gods smell them in heaven, and are gracious to mortals for their fragrance's sake."

"I am so happy!" Dong-Yung said, poking the toe of her slipper in and out the sunlight. She looked up at the man before her, and saw he was tall and slim and as subtle-featured as the cross-legged bronze Budd-

ha himself. His long, thin hands were hid, crossed and slipped along the wrists within the loose apricot satin sleeves of his brocaded garment. His feet, in their black satin slippers and tight-fitting white muslin socks, were austere and aristocratic. Dong-Yung, when he was absent, loved best to think of him thus, with his hands hidden and his eyes smiling.

"The willow-leaves will bud soon," answered Dong-Yung, glancing over her shoulder at the tapering, yellowing twigs of the ancient tree.

"And the beech-blossoms," continued Foh-Kyung. "'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.'"

"The foreign devil's wisdom," answered Dong-Yung.

"It is greater than ours, Dong-Yung; greater and lovelier. To-day, to-day, I will go to their hall of ceremonial worship and say to their holy priest that I think and believe the Jesus way."

"Oh, most-beloved Master, is it also permitted to women, to a small wife, to believe the Jesus way?"

"I will believe for thee, too, little Lotus Flower in the Pond."

"Tell me, O Teacher of Knowledge—tell me that in my heart and in my mind I may follow a little way whither thou goest in thy heart and in thy mind!"

Foh-Kyung moved out of the shadow of the ancestral hall and stood in the warm sunlight beside Dong-Yung, his small wife. His hands were still withheld and hidden, clasping his wrists within the wide, loose apricot sleeves of his gown, but his eyes looked as if they touched her. Dong-Yung hid her happiness even as the flowers hide theirs, within silent, incurving petals.

"The water is cold as the chill of death. Go, bring me hot water—water hot enough to scald an egg."

Foh-Kyung and Dong-Yung turned to the casement in the upper right-hand wing and listened apprehensively. The quick chatter of angry voices rushed out into the sunlight.

"The honourable great wife is very cross this morning." Dong-Yung shivered and turned back to the lilies. "To-day perhaps she will beat me again. Would that

t least I had borne my lord a young prince for a son; hen perhaps——"

"Go not near her, little Jewel. Stay in thine own ooms. Nay, I have sons a-plenty. Do not regret the hildlessness. I would not have your body go down ne foot into the grave for a child. I love thee for hyself."

"Now my lord speaks truly, as do the foreign devils o the shameless, open-faced women. I like the ways f the outside kingdom well. Tell me more of them, ny Master."

Foh-Kyung moved his hands as if he would have ithdrawn them from his apricot-coloured sleeves. Dong-Yung saw the withheld motion, and swayed nearer. For a moment Dong-Yung saw the look in his eyes that ngulfed her in happiness; then it was gone, and he ooked away past her, across the opening lily-buds and he black rampart of the wall, at something distant, yet recious. Foh-Kyung moved closer. His face changed. His eyes held that hidden rapture that only Dong-Yung and the foreign-born priest had seen.

"Little Jewel, wilt thou go with me to the priest of he foreign-born faith? Come!" He withdrew his and from his sleeve and touched Dong-Yung on the houlder. "Come, we will go hand in hand, thou and , even as the men and women of the Jesus thinking; ot as Chinese, I before, and thou six paces behind. heir God loves men and women alike."

"Is it permitted to a small wife to worship the for-gn-born God?" Dong-Yung lifted her eyes to the ace of Foh-Kyung. "Teach me, O my Lord Master! Iy understanding is but young and fearful——"

Foh-Kyung moved into the sunlight beside her.

"Their God loves all the world. Their God is dif-erent, little Flower, from the painted images, full of essings, not curses. He loves even little girl babies hat mothers would throw away. Truly his heart is still ore loving than the heart of a mother."

"And yet I am fearful——" Dong-Yung looked ck into the shadows of the guest-hall, where the an-estral tablets glowed upon the wall, and crimson tapers

stood ready before them. "Our gods I have touched and handled."

"Nay, in the Jesus way there is no fear left." Foh-Kyung's voice dropped lower. Its sound filled Dong-Yong with longing. "When the wind screams in the chimneys at night, it is but the wind, not evil spirits. When the summer breeze blows in at the open door, we need not bar it. It is but the summer breeze from the rice-fields, uninhabited by witch-ghosts. When we eat our morning rice, we are compelled to make no offering to the kitchen gods in the stove corner. They cannot curse our food. Ah, in the Jesus way there is no more fear!"

Dong-Yung drew away from her lord and master and looked at him anxiously. He was not seeing her at all. His eyes looked beyond, across the fragile, lily-petals, through the solid black wall, at a vision he saw in the world. Dong-Yung bent her head to sniff the familiar sweet springtime orchid hanging from the jade stud on her shoulder.

"Your words are words of good hearing, O beloved Teacher. Nevertheless, let me follow six paces behind. I am not worthy to touch your hand. Six paces behind, when the sun shines in your face, my feet walk in the shadow of your garments."

Foh-Kyung gathered his gaze back from his visions and looked at his small wife, standing in a pool of sunshine before him. Overhead the lazy crows flew by, winging out from their city roosts to the rice-fields for the day's food.

"Tea-boiled eggs!" cried a vender from beyond the wall. A man stopped at the gate, put down his shoulder-tray of food, and bargained with the ancient, mahogany-scalped gate-keeper. Faint odours of food frying in oil stole out from the depths of the house behind him. And Dong-Yung, very quiet and passive in the pose of her body, gazed up at Foh-Kyung with those strange, secretive, ardent eyes. All around him was China, its very essence and sound and smell. Dong-Yung was a part of it all; nay, she was even the very heart of it, swaying there in the yellow light among the lily-petals.

"Precious Jewel! Yet it is sweeter to walk side by side, our feet stepping out into the sunlight together, and our shadows mingling behind. I want you beside me."

The last words rang with sudden warmth. Dong-Yung trembled and crimsoned. It was not seemly that a man speak to a woman thus, even though that man was a husband and the woman his wife, not even though the words were said in an open court, where the eyes of the great wife might spy and listen. And yet Dong-Yung thrilled to those words.

An amah called, "The morning rice is ready."

Dong-Yung hurried into the open room, where the light was still faint, filtering in through a high-silled window and the door. A round, brown table stood in the center of the room. In the corner of the room behind stood the crescentic, white plaster stove, with its dull wooden kettle-lids and its crackling straw. Two cooks, country women, sat in the hidden corner behind the stove, and poked in the great bales of straw and gossiped. Their voices and the answers of the serving amah filled the kitchen with noise. In their decorous niche at the upper right hand of the stove sat the two kitchen gods, small ancient idols, with hidden hands and crossed feet, gazing out upon a continually hungry world. Since time was they had sat there, ensconced at the very root of life, seemingly placid and unseeing and unhearing, yet venomously watching to be placated with food. Opposite the stove, on the white wall, hung a row of brass hooks, from which dangled porcelain spoons with pierced handles. On a serving-table stood the piled bowls for the day, blue-and-white rice patterns, of a thin, translucent ware, showing the delicate light through the rice seeds; red-and-green dragoned bowls for the puddings; and tiny saucer-like platters for the vegetables. The tea-cups, saucered and lidded, but unhandled, stood in a row before the polished brass hot-water kettle.

The whole room was full of a stirring, wakening life, of the crackling straw fire, of the steaming rice, all white and separate-kerneled in its great, shallow, black

iron kettles, lidded with those heavy hand-made wooden lids, while the boiling tea water hissed, and spat out a snake of white steam.

With that curious democracy of China, where high and low alike are friendly, Dong-Yung hurried into her beloved kitchen.

"Has the master come?" asked the serving maid.

"Coming, coming," Dong-Yung answered, "I myself will take in his morning rice, after I have offered the morning oblations to the gods."

Dong-Yung selected two of the daintiest blue-and-white rice-pattern bowls. The cook lifted off the wooden lid of the rice-kettle, and Dong-Yung scooped up a dipperful of the snow-white kernels. On the tiny shelf before each god, the father and mother god of the household, Dong-Yung placed her offering. She stood off a moment, surveying them in pleased satisfaction—the round, blue bowls, with the faint tracery of light; the complacent gods above, red and green and crimson, so age-long, comfortably ensconced in their warm stove corner. She made swift obeisance with her hands and body before those ancient idols. A slant of sunshine swept in from the high windows and fell over her in a shaft of light. The thoughts of her heart were all warm and mixed and confused. She was happy. She loved her kitchen, her gods, all the familiar ways of Chinese life. She loved her silken, satin clothes, perfumed and embroidered and orchid-crowned, yet most of all she loved her lord and master. Perhaps it was this love for him that made all the rest of life so precious, that made each bowl of white rice an oblation, each daily act a glorification. So she flung out her arms and bent her head before the kitchen gods, the symbol of her ancient happiness.

"Dong-Yung, I do not wish you to do this any more."

Dong-Yung turned, her obeisance half arrested in mid-air. Foh-Kyung stood in the doorway.

"My lord," stammered Dong-Yung, "I did not understand your meaning."

"I know that, little Flower in my House. The new meaning is hard to understand. I, too, am but a blind

SANTA ROSA.

child unused to the touch of the road. But the kitchen gods matter no more; we pray to a spirit."

Foh-Kyung, in his long apricot-coloured garment, crossed the threshold of the kitchen, crossed the shadow and sunlight that stripped the bare board floor, and stood before the kitchen gods. His eyes were on a level with theirs, strange, painted wooden eyes that stared forth inscrutably into the eating centuries. Dong-Yung stood half bowed, breathless with a quick, cold fear. The cook, one hand holding a shiny brown dipper, the other a porcelain dish, stood motionless at the wooden table under the window. From behind the stove peeped the frightened face of one of the fire-tenders. The whole room was turned to stone, motionless, expectant, awaiting the releasing moment of arousement—all, that is, but the creeping sunshine, sliding nearer and nearer the crossed feet of the kitchen gods; and the hissing steam fire, warming, coddling the hearts of the gods. Sun at their feet, fire at their hearts, food before them, and mortals turned to stone!

Foh-Kyung laughed softly, standing there, eye-level with the kitchen gods. He stretched out his two hands, and caught a god in each. A shudder ran through the motionless room.

"It is wickedness!" The porcelain dish fell from the hand of the cook, and a thousand rice-kernels, like scattered pearls, ran over the floor.

"A blasphemer," the fire-tender whispered, peering around the stove with terrified eyes. "This household will bite off great bitterness."

Foh-Kyung walked around the corner of the stove. The fire sparked and hissed. The sunshine filled the empty niche. Not since the building of the house and the planting of the tall black cypress-trees around it, a hundred years ago, had the sunlight touched the wall behind the kitchen gods.

Dong-Yung sprang into life. She caught Foh-Kyung's sleeve.

"O my Lord and Master, I pray you, do not utterly cast them away into the burning, fiery furnace! I fear some evil will befall us."

Foh-Kyung, a green-and-gold god in each hand, stopped and turned. His eyes smiled at Dong-Yung. She was so little and so precious and so afraid! Dong-Yung saw the look of relenting. She held his sleeve the tighter.

"Light of my Eyes, do good deeds to me. My faith is but a little faith. How could it be great unto thy great faith? Be gentle with my kitchen gods. Do not utterly destroy them. I will hide them."

Foh-Kyung smiled yet more, and gave the plaster gods into her hands as one would give a toy to a child.

"They are thine. Do with them as thou wilt, but no more set them up in this stove corner and offer them morning rice. They are but painted, plastered gods. I worship the spirit above."

Foh-Kyung sat down at the men's table in the men's room beyond. An amah brought him rice and tea. Other men of the household there was none, and he ate his meal alone. From the women's room across the court came a shrill round of voices. The voice of the great wife was loudest and shrillest. The voices of the children, his sons and daughters, rose and fell with clear childish insistence among the older voices. The amah's voice laughed with an equal gaiety.

Dong-Yung hid away the plastered green-and-gold gods. Her heart was filled with a delicious fear. Her lord was even master of the gods. He picked them up in his two hands, he carried them about as carelessly as a man carries a boy child astride his shoulder; he would even have cast them into the fire! Truly, she shivered with delight. Nevertheless, she was glad she had hidden them safely away. In the corner of the kitchen stood a box of white pigskin with beaten brass clasps made like the outspread wings of a butterfly. Underneath the piles of satin she had hidden them, and the key to the butterfly clasps was safe in her belt-jacket.

Dong-Yung stood in the kitchen door and watched Foh-Kyung.

"Does my lord wish for anything?"

Foh-Kyung turned, and saw her standing there in the

doorway. Behind her were the white stove and the sun-filled, empty niche. The light flooded through the doorway. Foh-Kyung set down his rice-bowl from his left hand and his ivory chop-sticks from his right. He stood before her.

"Truly, Dong-Yung, I want thee. Do not go away and leave me. Do not cross to the eating-room of the women and children. Eat with me."

"It has not been heard of in the Middle Kingdom for a woman to eat with a man."

"Nevertheless, it shall be. Come!"

Dong-Yung entered slowly. The light in this dim room was all gathered upon the person of Foh-Kyung, in the gleaming patterned roses of his gown, in his deep amethyst ring, in his eyes. Dong-Yung came because of his eyes. She crossed the room slowly, swaying with that peculiar grace of small-footed women, till she stood at the table beside Foh-Kyung. She was now even more afraid than when he would have cast the kitchen gods into the fire. They were but gods, kitchen gods, that he was about to break; this was the primeval bondage of the land, ancient custom.

"Give me thy hand and look up with thine eyes and thy heart."

Dong-Yung touched his hand. Foh-Kyung looked up as if he saw into the ether beyond, and there saw a spirit vision of ineffable radiance. But Dong-Yung watched him. She saw him transfigured with an inner light. His eyes moved in prayer. The exaltation spread out from him to her, it tingled through their finger-tips, it covered her from head to foot.

Foh-Kyung drooped her hand and moved. Dong-Yung leaned nearer.

"I, too, would believe the Jesus way."

In the peculiar quiet of mid-afternoon, when the shadows begin to creep down from the eaves of the pagodas and zigzag across the rice-fields to bed, Foh-Kyung and Dong-Yung arrived at the camp-ground of the foreigners. The lazy native streets were still dull with the end of labour. At the gate of the camp-ground the rickshaw coolies tipped down the bamboo shafts, to the ground.

Dong-Yung stepped out quickly, and looked at her lord and master. He smiled.

"Nay, I do not fear," Dong-Yung answered, with her eyes on his face. "Yet this place is strange, and lays a coldness around my heart."

"Regard not their awkward ways," said Foh-Kyung, as he turned in at the gate; "in their hearts they have the secret of life."

The gate-keeper bowed, and slipped the coin, warm from Foh-Kyung's hand, into his ready pocket.

"Walk beside me, little Wife of my Heart." Foh-Kyung stopped in the wide gravelled road and waited for Dong-Yung. Standing there in the sunlight, more vivid yet than the light itself, in his imperial yellow robes, he was the end of life, nay, life itself, to Dong-Yung. "We go to the house of the foreign priest to seek until we find the foreign God. Let us go side by side."

Dong-Yung, stepping with slow, small-footed grace, walked beside him.

"My understanding is as the understanding of a little child, beloved Teacher; but my heart lies like a shell in thy hand, its words but as the echo of thine. My honour is great that thou do not forget me in the magnitude of the search."

Dong-Yung's pleated satin skirts swayed to and fro against the imperial yellow of Foh-Kyung's robe. Her face coloured like a pale spring blossom, looked strangely ethereal above her brocade jacket. Her heart still beat thickly, half with fear and half with the secret rapture of their quest and her lord's desire for her.

Foh-Kyung took a silken and ivory fan from an inner pocket and spread it in the air. Dong-Yung knew the fan well. It came from a famous jeweller's on Nanking Road, and had been designed by an old court poet of long ago. The tiny ivory spokes were fretted like ivy-twigs in the North, but on the leaves of silk was painted a love-story of the South. There was a tea-house, with a maiden playing a lute, and the words of the song, fantastic black ideographs, floated off to the ears of her

lover. Foh-Kyung spread out its leaves in the sun, and looked at it and smiled."

"Never is the heart of man satisfied," he said, "alone. Neither when the willow fuzz flies in the spring, or when the midnight snow silvers the palms. Least of all is it satisfied when it seeks the presence of God above. I want thee beside me."

Dong-Yung hid her delight. Already for the third time he said those words—those words that changed all the world from one of a loving following-after to a marvelous oneness.

So they stepped across the lawn together. It was to Dong-Yung as if she stepped into an unknown land. She walked on flat green grass. Flowers in stiff and ordered rows went sedately round and round beneath a lurid red brick wall. A strange, square-cornered, flat-topped house squatted in the midst of the flat green grass. On the lawn at one side was a white-covered table, with a man and a woman sitting beside it. The four corners of the table-cloth dripped downward to the flat green grass. It was all very strange and ugly. Perhaps it was a garden, but no one would have guessed it. Dong-Yung longed to put each flower plant in a dragon bowl by itself and place it where the sun caught its petals one by one as the hours flew by. She longed for a narrow, tile-edged patch to guide her feet through all that flat green expanse. A little shiver ran over her. She looked back, down the wide gravelled way, through the gate, where the gate-keeper sat, tipped back against the wall on his stool, to the shop of the money-changer's opposite. A boy leaned half across the polished wood counter and shook his fist in the face of the money-changer. "Thou thief!" he cried. "Give me my two cash!" Dong-Yung was reassured. Around her lay all the dear familiar things; at her side walked her lord and master. And he had said they were seeking a new freedom, a God of love. Her thoughts stirred at her heart and caught her breath away.

The foreigners rose to greet them. Dong-Yung touched the hand of an alien man. She did not like it at all. The foreign-born woman made her sit down beside her, and

offered her bitter, strong tea in delicate, lidless cups, with handles bent like a twisted flower-branch.

"I have been meaning to call for a long time, Mrs. Li," said the foreign-born woman.

"The great wife will receive thee with much honour," Dong-Yung answered.

"I am so glad you came with your husband."

"Yes," Dong-Yung answered, with a little smile. "The customs of the foreign-born are pleasant to our eyes."

"I am glad you like them," said the foreign-born woman. "I couldn't bear not to go everywhere with my husband."

Dong-Yung liked her suddenly on account of the look that sprang up a moment in her eyes and vanished again. She looked across at the priest, her husband, a man in black, with thin lips and seeing eyes. The eyes of the foreign woman, looking at the priest, her husband, showed how much she loved him. "She loves him even as a small wife loves," Dong-Yung thought to herself. Dong-Yung watched the two men, the one in imperial yellow, the one in black, sitting beside each other and talking. Dong-Yung knew they were talking of the search. The foreign-born woman was speaking to her again.

"The doctor told me I would die if I came to China; but John felt he had a call. I would not stand in his way."

The woman's face was illumined.

"And now you are very happy?" Dong-Yung announced.

"And now I am very happy; just as you will be very happy."

"I am always happy since my lord took me for his small wife." Dong-Yung matched her happiness with the happiness of the foreign-born woman, proudly, with assurance. In her heart she knew no woman, born to eat bitterness, had ever been so happy as she in all the worlds beneath the heavens. She looked around her, beyond the failure of the foreign woman's garden, at the piled, peaked roofs of China looking over the wall. The fragrance of a blossoming plum-tree stole across from

a Chinese courtyard, and a peach-branch waved pink in the air. A wonder of contentment filled Dong-Yung.

All the while Foh-Kyung was talking. Dong-Yung turned back from all the greenness around her to listen. He sat very still, with his hands hid in his sleeves. The wave-ridged hem of his robe—blue and green and purple and red and yellow—was spread out decorously above his feet. Dong-Yung looked and looked at him, so still and motionless and so gorgeously arrayed. She looked from his feet, long, slim, in black satin slippers, and close-fitting white muslin socks, to the feet of the foreign priest. His feet were huge, ugly black things. From his feet Dong-Yung's eyes crept up to his face, over his priestly black clothes, rimmed with stiff white at wrist and throat. Yes, his face was even as the face of a priest, of one who serves between the gods and men, a face of seeing eyes and a rigid mouth. Dong-Yung shuddered.

"And so we have come, even as the foreign-born God tells us, a man and his wife, to believe the Jesus way."

Foh-Kyung spoke in a low voice, but his face smiled. Dong-Yung smiled, too, at his open, triumphant declarations. She said over his words to herself, under her breath, so that she would remember them surely when she wanted to call them back to whisper to her heart in the dark of some night. "We two, a man and his wife"—only dimly, with the heart of a little child, did Dong-Yung understand and follow Foh-Kyung; but the throb of her heart answered the hidden light in his eyes.

The foreign-born priest stood up. The same light shone in his eyes. It was a rapture, an exaltation. Suddenly an unheard-of- thing happened. The outside kingdom woman put her arms around Dong-Yung! Dong-Yung was terrified. She was held tight against the other woman's shoulder. The foreign-born woman used a strange perfume. Dong-Yung only half heard her whispered words.

"We are like that, too. We could not be separated. Oh, you will be happy!"

Dong-Yung thought of the other woman. "In her

heart she is humble and seemly. It is only her speech and her ways that are unfitting."

"We are going into the chapel a moment," said the priest. "Will you come, too?"

Dong-Yung looked at Foh-Kyung, a swift upward glance, like the sudden sweep of wings. She read his answer in his eyes. He wanted her to come. Not even in the temple of the foreign-born God did he wish to be without her.

A coolie called the foreign-born woman away.

The priest, in his tight trousers, and jacket, black and covered with a multitude of round flat buttons, stood up, and led the way into the house and down a long corridor to a closed door at the end. Dong-Yung hurried behind the two men. At the door the priest stood aside and held it open for her to pass in first. She hesitated. Foh-Kyung nodded.

"Do not think fearful things, little Princess," he whispered. "Enter, and be not afraid. There is no fear in the worship of Jesus."

So Dong-Yung crossed the threshold first. Something caught her breath away, just as the chanting of the dragon priests always did. She took a few steps forward and stood behind a low-backed bench. Before her, the light streamed into the little chapel through one luminous window of coloured glass above the altar. It lay all over the grey-tiled floor in roses and sunflowers of pink and god. A deep purple stripe fell across the head of the black-robed priest. Dong-Yung was glad of that. It made his robe less hideous, and she could not understand how one could serve a god unless in beautiful robes. On the altar beneath the window of coloured flowers were two tall silver candlesticks, with smooth white tapers. A wide-mouthed vase filled with Chinese lilies stood between them. The whole chapel was faintly fragrant with their incense. So even the foreign-born worshipers lit candles, and offered the scent of the lilies to their spirit God. Truly, all the gods of all the earth and in the sky are lovers of lit candles and flowers. Also, one prays to all gods.

The place was very quiet and peaceful, mottled with

the gorgeous, flowerlike splashes of colour. The waiting candles, the echoes of many prayers, the blossom of worship filled the tiny chapel. Dong-Yung liked it, despite herself, despite the strangeness of the imageless altar, despite the clothes of the priest. She stood quite still behind the bench flooded and filled with an all-pervading sense of happiness.

Foh-Kyung and the black-robed priest walked past her, down the little aisle, to a shiny brass railing that went like a fence round before the altar. The foreign-born priest laid one hand on the railing as if to kneel down, but Foh-Kyung turned and beckoned with his chin to Dong-Yung to come. She obeyed at once. She was surprisingly unafraid. Her feet walked through the patterns of colour, which slid over her head and hands, gold from the gold of a cross and purple from the robe of a king. As if stepping through a rainbow, she came slowly down the aisle to the waiting men, and in her heart and in her eyes lay the light of all love and trust.

Foh-Kyung caught her hand.

"See, I take her hand," he said to the priest, "even as you would take the hand of your wife, proud and unashamed in the presence of your God. Even as your love is, so shall ours be. Where the thoughts of my heart lead, the heart of my small wife follows. Give us your blessing."

Foh-Kyung drew Dong-Yung to her knees beside him. His face was hidden, after the manner of the foreign worshipers; but hers was uplifted, her eyes gazing at the glass with the colours of many flowers and the shapes of men and angels. She was happier than she had ever been—happier even than when she had first worshiped the ancestral tablets with her lord and master, happier even than at the feast of the dead, when they laid their food offerings on the shaven grave-mounds. She felt closer to Foh-Kyung than in all her life before.

She waited. The silence grew and grew till in the heart of it something ominous took the place of its all-pervading peace. Foh-Kyung lifted his face from his hands and rose to his feet. Dong-Yung turned, still kneeling, to scan his eyes. The black-robed priest stood

off and looked at them with horror. Surely it was horror! Never had Dong-Yung really liked him. Slowly she rose, and stood beside and a little behind Foh-Kyung. He had not blessed them. Faintly, from beyond the walls of the Christian chapel came the beating of drums. Devil-drums they were. Dong-Yung half smiled at the long-known familiar sound.

"Your small wife?" said the priest. "Have you another wife?"

"Assuredly," Foh-Kyung answered. "All men have a great wife first; but this, my small wife, is the wife of my heart. Together we have come to seek and find the Jesus way."

The priest wiped his hand across his face. Dong-Yung saw that it was wet with tiny round balls of sweat. His mouth had suddenly become one thin red line, but in his eyes lay pain.

"Impossible," he said. His voice was quite different now, and sounded like bits of metal falling on stone. "No man can enter the church while living in sin with a woman other than his lawful wife. If your desire is real, put her away."

With instant response, Foh-kyung made a stately bow.

"Alas! I have made a grievous mistake. The responsibility will be on my body. I thought all were welcome. We go. Later on, perhaps, we may meet again."

The priest spoke hurriedly.

"I do not understand your meaning. Is this belief of such light weight that you will toss it away for a sinful woman? Put her away, and come and believe."

But Foh-Kyung did not hear his words. As he turned away, Dong-Yung followed close behind her lord and master, only half comprehending, yet filled with a great fear. They went out again into the sunshine, out across the flat green grass, under the iron gateway, back into the Land of the Flowery Kingdom. Foh-Kyung did not speak until he put Dong-Yung in the rickshaw.

"Little Wife of my Heart," he said, "stop at the jeweller's and buy thee new ear-rings, these ear-rings of the sky-blue stone and sea-tears, and have thy hair

dressed and thy gowns perfumed, and place the two red circles on the smile of thy cheeks. To-night we will feast. Hast thou forgotten to-night is the Feast of the Lanterns, when all good Buddhists rejoice?"

He stood beside her rickshaw, in his imperial yellow garment hemmed with the rainbow waves of the sea, and smiled down into her eyes.

"But the spirit God of love, the foreign-born spirit God?" said Dong-Yung. "Shall we feast to him, too?"

"Nay, it is not fitting to feast to two gods at once," said Foh-Kyung. "Do as I have said."

He left her. Dong-Yung, riding through the sun-splashed afternoon, buying coloured jewels and flowery perfume and making herself beautiful, yet felt uneasy. She had not quite understood. A dim knowledge advanced toward her like a wall of fog. She pressed her two hands against it and held it off—held it off by sheer mental refusal to understand. In the courtyard at home the children were playing with their lighted animals, drawing their gaudy paper ducks, luminous with candle-light, to and fro on little standards set on four wheels. At the gate hung a tall red-and-white lantern, and over the roof floated a string of candle-lit balloons. In the ancestral hall the great wife had lit the red candles, speared on their slender spikes, before the tablets. In the kitchen the cooks and amahs were busy with the feast-cooking. Candles were stuck everywhere on the tables and benches. They threw little pools of light on the floor before the stove and looked at the empty niche. In the night it was merely a black hole in the stove filled with formless shadow. She wished—

"Dong-Yung, Flower in the House, where hast thou hidden the kitchen gods? Put them in their place." Foh-Kyung, still in imperial yellow, stood like a sun in the doorway.

Dong-Yung turned.

"But——"

"Put them back, little Jewel in the Hair. It is not permitted to worship the spirit God. There are bars and gates. The spirit of man must turn back in the searching, turn back to the images of plaster and paint."

Dong-Yung let the wall of fog slide over her. She dropped her resistance. She knew.

"Nay, not the spirit of man. It is but natural that the great God does not wish the importunings of a small wife. Worship thou alone the great God, and the shadow of that worship will fall on my heart."

"Nay, I cannot worship alone. My worship is not acceptable in the sight of the foreign God. My ways are not his ways."

Foh-Kyung's face was unlined and calm, yet Dong-Yung felt the hidden agony of his soul, flung back from its quest upon gods of plaster and paint.

"But I know the thoughts of thy heart, O Lord and Master, white and fragrant as the lily-buds that opened to-day. Has thy wish changed?"

"Nay, my wish is even the same, but it is not permitted to a man of two wives to be a follower of the spirit God."

Dong-Yung had known it all along. This knowledge came with no surprise. It was she who kept him from the path of his desire!

"Put back the kitchen gods," said Foh-Kyung. "We will live and believe and die even as our fathers have done. The gate to the God of love is closed."

The feast was served. In the sky one moon blotted out a world of stars. Foh-Kyung sat alone, smoking. Laughter and talk filled the women's wing. The amahs and coolies were resting outside. A thin reed of music crept in and out among the laughter and talk, from the reed flute of the cook. The kitchen was quite empty. One candle on the table sent up a long smoky tongue of flame. The fire still smouldered in the corner. A little wind shook the cypress-branches without, and carried the scent of the opened lilies into the room.

Dong-Yung, still arrayed for feasting, went to the pigskin trunk in the corner, fitted the key from her belt into the carven brass wings of the butterfly, and lifted out the kitchen gods. One in each hand, she held them, green and gold. She put them back in their niche, and lifted up a bowl of rice to their feet, and beat her head on the ground before them.

"Forgive me, O my kitchen gods, forgive my injurious hands and heart; but the love of my master is even greater than my fear of thee. Thou and I, we bar the gates of heaven from him."

When she had finished, she tiptoed around the room, touching the chairs and tables with caressing fingers. She stole out into the courtyard, and bent to inhale the lily fragrance, sweeter by night than by day. "An auspicious day," the gate-keeper had said that morning. Foh-Kyung had stood beside her, with his feet in the sunshine; she remembered the light in his eyes. She bent her head till the fingers of the lily-petals touched her cheek. She crept back through the house, and looked at Foh-Kyung smoking. His eyes were dull, even as are the eyes of sightless bronze Buddhas. No, she would never risk going in to speak to him. If she heard the sound of his voice, if he called her "little Flower of the House," she would never have the strength to go. So she stood in the doorway and looked at him much as one looks at a sun, till wherever else one looks, one sees the same sun against the sky.

In the formless shadow she made a great obeisance, spreading out her arms and pressing the palms of her hands against the floor.

"O my Lord and Master," she said, with her lips against the boards of the floor, softly, so that none might hear her—"O my Lord and Master, I go. Even a small wife may unbar the gates of heaven."

First, before she went, she cast the two kitchen gods, green and gold, of ancient plaster, into the embers of the fire. There in the morning the cook-rice amahs found the onyx stones that had been their eyes. The house was still unlocked, the gate-keeper at the feast. Like a shadow she moved along the wall and through the gate. The smell of the lilies blew past her. Drums and chants echoed up the road, and the sounds of manifold feastings. She crept away down by the wall, where the moon laid a strip of blackness, crept away to unbar the gates of heaven for her lord and master.

APRIL 25TH, AS USUAL

By EDNA FERBER

From *Ladies Home Journal*

MRS. HOSEA C. BREWSTER always cleaned house in September and April. She started with the attic and worked her purifying path down to the cellar in strict accordance with Article I, Section 1, Unwritten Rules for House Cleaning. For twenty-five years she had done it. For twenty-five years she had hated it —being an intelligent woman. For twenty-five years, towel swathed about her head, skirt pinned back, sleeves rolled up—the costume dedicated to house cleaning since the days of What's-Her-Name, mother of Lemuel (see Proverbs)—Mrs. Brewster had gone through the ceremony twice a year.

Furniture on the porch, woolens on the line, mattresses in the yard—everything that could be pounded, beaten, whisked, rubbed, flapped, shaken or aired was dragged out and subjected to one or all of these indignities. After which, completely cowed, they were dragged in again and set in their places. Year after year, in attic and in cellar, things had piled up higher and higher—useless things, sentimental things; things in trunks; things in chests; shelves full of things wrapped up in brown-paper parcels.

And boxes—oh, above all, boxes; pasteboard boxes, long and flat, square and oblong, each bearing weird and cryptic pencillings on one end; cryptic, that, is to anyone except Mrs. Brewster and you who have owned an attic. Thus "H's Fshg Tckl" jabberwocked one long slim box. Another stunned you with "Cur Ted Slpg Pch." A cabalistic third hid its contents under "Slp Cov Pinky Rm." To say nothing of such curt yet intriguing fragments as "Blk Nt Drs" and "Sun Par Val." Once

you had the code key they translated themselves simply enough into such homely items as Hosey's fishing tackle, canvas curtains for Ted's sleeping porch, slip-covers for Pinky's room, black net dress, sun-parlour valance.

The contents of those boxes formed a commentary on normal American household life as lived by Mr. and Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster, of Winnebago, Wisconsin. Hosey's rheumatism had prohibited trout fishing these ten years; Ted wrote from Arizona that "the li'l' ol' sky" was his sleeping-porch roof and you didn't have to worry out there about the neighbours seeing you in your pyjamas; Pink's rose-cretonne room had lacked an occupant since Pinky left the Winnebago High School for the Chicago Art Institute, thence to New York and those amazingly successful magazine covers that stare up at you from your table—young lady, hollow chested (she'd need to be with that décolletage), carrying feather fan. You could tell a Brewster cover at sight, without the fan. That leaves the black net dress and sun-parlour valance. The first had grown too tight under the arms (Mrs. Brewster's arms); the second had faded.

Now don't gather from this that Mrs. Brewster was an ample, pie-baking, ginghamed old soul who wore black silk and a crushed-looking hat with a palsied rose atop it. Nor that Hosea C. Brewster was spectacled and slippered. Not at all. The Hosea C. Brewsters, of Winnebago, Wisconsin, were the people you've met on the veranda of the Moana Hotel at Honolulu, or at the top of Pike's Peak, or peering into the restless heart of Vesuvius. They were the prosperous Middle-Western type of citizen who runs down to Chicago to see the new plays and buy a hat, and to order a dozen Wedgwood salad plates at Field's.

Mrs. Brewster knew about Dunsany and Georgette and alligator pears; and Hosea Brewster was in the habit of dropping around to the Elks' Club, up above Schirmer's furniture store on Elm Street, at about five in the afternoon on his way home from the cold-storage plant. The Brewster house was honeycombed with sleeping porches and sun parlours and linen closets, and laundry

chutes and vegetable bins and electric surprises as your well-to-do Middle-Western home is likely to be.

That home had long ago grown too large for the two of them—physically, that is. But as the big frame house had expanded, so had they—intolerance and understanding and humanness—until now, as you talked with them, you felt that there was room and to spare of sun-filled mental chambers, and shelves well stored with experience, and pantries and bins and closets for all your worries and confidences.

But the attic! And the cellar! The attic was the kind of attic every woman longs for who hasn't one and every woman loathes who has. "If I only had some place to put things in!" wails the first. And, "If it weren't for the attic I'd have thrown this stuff away long ago," complains the second. Mrs. Brewster herself had helped plan it. Hardwood floored, spacious light, the Brewster attic revealed to you the social, æsthetic, educational and spiritual progress of the entire family as clearly as if a sociologist had chartered it.

Take, for example (before we run down to the cellar for a minute), the crayon portraits of Gran'ma and Gran'pa Brewster. When Ted had been a junior and Pinky a freshman at the Winnebago High School the crayon portraits had beamed down upon them from the living-room wall. To each of these worthy old people the artist had given a pair of hectic pink cheeks. Gran'ma Brewster especially, simpering down at you from the labyrinthian scrolls of her sextuple gold frame, was rouged like a soubrette and further embellished with a pair of gentian-blue eyes behind steel-bowed specs. Pinky—and in fact the entire Brewster household—had thought these massive atrocities the last word in artistic ornament. By the time she reached her sophomore year, Pinky had prevailed upon her mother to banish them to the dining-room. Then two years later, when the Chicago decorator did over the living-room and the dining-room, the crayons were relegated to the upstairs hall.

Ted and Pinky, away at school, began to bring their

friends back with them for the vacations. Pinky's room had been done over in cream enamel and rose-flowered cretonne. She said the chromos in the hall spoiled the entire second floor. So the gold frames, glittering undimmed, the cheeks as rosily glowing as ever, found temporary resting-place in a nondescript back chamber known as the sewing room. Then the new sleeping porch was built for Ted, and the portraits ended their journeying in the attic.

One paragraph will cover the cellar. Stationary tubs, laundry stove. Behind that, bin for potatoes, bin for carrots, bins for onions, apples, cabbages. Boxed shelves for preserves. And behind that Hosea C. Brewster's *bête noir* and plaything, tyrant and slave—the furnace. "She's eating up coal this winter," Hosea Brewster would complain. Or: "Give her a little more draft, Fred." Fred, of the furnace and lawn mower, would shake a doleful head. "She ain't drawin' good. I do' know what's got into her."

By noon of this particular September day—a blue-and-gold Wisconsin September day—Mrs. Brewster had reached that stage in the cleaning of the attic when it looked as if it would never be clean and orderly again. Taking into consideration Miz' Merz (Mis' Merz by-the-day, you understand) and Gussie, the girl, and Fred, there was very little necessity for Mrs. Brewster's official house-cleaning uniform. She might have unpinned her skirt, unbound her head, rolled down her sleeves and left for the day, serene in the knowledge that no corner, no chandelier, no mirror, no curlicue so hidden, so high, so glittering, so ornate that it might hope to escape the rag or brush of one or the other of this relentless and expert crew.

Every year, twice a year, as this box, that trunk or chest was opened and its contents revealed, Mis' Merz would say: "You keepin' this, Miz' Brewster?"

"That? Oh, dear yes!" Or: "Well—I don't know. You can take that home with you if you want it. It might make over for Minnie."

Yet why, in the name of all that's ridiculous, did she treasure the funeral wheat wreath in the walnut frame?

Nothing is more *passé* than a last summer's hat, yet the leghorn and pink-cambric-rose thing in the tin trunk was the one Mrs. Brewster had worn when a bride. Then the plaid kilted dress with the black velvet monkey jacket that Pinky had worn when she spoke her first piece at the age of seven—well, these were things that even the rapacious eye of Miz' Merz (by-the-day) passed by unbrightened by covetousness.

The smell of soap and water, and cedar, and moth balls, and dust, and the ghost of a perfumery that Pinky used to use pervaded the hot attic. Mrs. Brewster, head and shoulders in a trunk, was trying not to listen and not to seem not to listen to Miz' Merz' recital of her husband's relations' latest flagrancy.

"'Families is nix,' I says. 'I got my own fam'ly to look out fuh,' I says. Like that. 'Well,' s's he, 'w'en it comes to *that,*' s's he, 'I guess I got some——'" Punctuated by thumps, spatterings, swashings and much heavy breathing, so that the sound of light footsteps along the second-floor hallway, a young clear voice calling, then the same footsteps, fleeter now, on the attic stairway, were quite unheard.

Pinky's arm were around her mother's neck and for one awful moment it looked as if both were to be decapitated by the trunk lid, so violent had been Mrs. Brewster's start of surprise.

Incoherent little cries, and sentences unfinished.

"Pinky! Why—my baby! We didn't get your telegram. Did you——"

"No; I didn't. I just thought I—— Don't look so dazed, mummy—— You're all smudged too—what in the world!" Pinky straightened her hat and looked about the attic. "Why, mother! You're—you're house cleaning!" There was a stunned sort of look on her face. Pinky's last visit home had been in June, all hammocks, and roses, and especially baked things, and motor trips into the country.

"Of course. This is September. But if I'd known you were coming—— Come here to the window. Let mother see you. Is that the kind of hat they're—why, it's a winter one, isn't it? Already! Dear me, I've

just got used to the angle of my summer one. You must telephone father."

Miz' Merz, damply calicoed, rose from a corner and came forward, wiping a moist and parboiled hand on her skirt. "Ha' do, Pinky? Ain't forgot your old friends, have you?"

"It's Mrs. Merz!" Pinky put her cool, sweet fingers into the other woman's spongy clasp. "Why, hello, Mrs. Merz! Of course when there's house cleaning—I'd forgotten all about house cleaning—that there was such a thing, I mean."

"It's got to be done," replied Miz' Merz severely.

Pinky, suddenly looking like one of her own magazine covers (in tailor clothes), turned swiftly to her mother. "Nothing of the kind," she said crisply. She looked about the hot, dusty, littered room. She included and then banished it all with one sweeping gesture. "Nothing of the kind. This is—this is an anachronism."

"Mebbe so," retorted Miz' Merz with equal crispness. "But it's got to be cleaned just the same. Yessir; it's got to be cleaned."

They smiled at each other then, the mother and daughter. They descended the winding attic stairs happily, talking very fast and interrupting each other.

Mrs. Brewster's skirt was still pinned up. Her hair was bound in the protecting towel. "You must telephone father. No, let's surprise him. You'll hate the dinner—built around Miz' Merz; you know—boiled. Well, you know what a despot she is."

It was hot for September, in Wisconsin. As they came out to the porch Pinky saw that there were tiny beads of moisture under her mother's eyes and about her chin. The sight infuriated her somehow. "Well, really, mother!"

Mrs. Brewster unpinned her skirt and smoothed it down and smiled at Pinky, all unconscious that she looked like a plump, pink Sister of Mercy with that towel bound tightly about her hair. With a swift movement Pinky unpinned the towel, unwound it, dabbed with it tenderly at her mother's chin and brow, rolled it into a vicious wad and hurled it through the open doorway.

"Now just what does that mean?" said Mrs. Brewster equably. "Take off your hat and coat, Pinky, but don't treat them that way—unless that's the way they're doing in New York. Everything is so informal since the war." She had a pretty wit of her own, Mrs. Brewster.

Of course Pinky laughed then, and kissed her mother and hugged her hard. "It's just that it seems so idiotic—your digging around in an attic in this day and age! Why it's—it's——" Pinky could express herself much more clearly in colours than in words. "There is no such thing as an attic. People don't clean them any more. I never realized before—this huge house. It has been wonderful to come back to, of course. But just you and dad." She stopped. She raised two young fists high in important anger. "Do you *like* cleaning the attic?"

"Why, no. I hate it."

"Then why in the world——"

"I've always done it, Pinky. And while they may not be wearing attics in New York, we haven't taken them off in Winnebago. Come on up to your room, dear. It looks bare. If I'd known you were coming—the slip covers——"

"Are they in the box in the attic labeled 'Slp Cov Pinky Rum'?" She succeeded in slurring it ludicrously.

It brought an appreciative giggle from Mrs. Brewster. A giggle need not be inconsistent with fifty years, especially if one's nose wrinkles up delightfully in the act. But no smile curved the daughter's stern young lips. Together they went up to Pinky's old room (the older woman stopped to pick up the crumpled towel on the hall floor). On the way they paused at the door of Mrs. Brewster's bedroom, so cool, so spacious, all soft greys and blues.

Suddenly Pinky's eyes widened with horror. She pointed an accusing forefinger at a large dark object in a corner near a window. "That's the old walnut desk!" she exclaimed.

"I know it."

The girl turned, half amused, half annoyed. "Oh,

mother dear! That's the situation in a nutshell. Without a shadow of doubt, there's an eradicable streak of black walnut in your gray-enamel make-up."

"Eradicable! That's a grand word, Pinky. Stylish! I never expected to meet it out of a book. And fu'thermore, as Miz' Merz would say, I didn't know there was any situation."

"I meant the attic. And it's more than a situation. It's a state of mind."

Mrs. Brewster had disappeared into the depths of her clothes closet. Her voice sounded muffled. "Pinky, you're talking the way they did at that tea you gave for father and me when we visited New York last winter." She emerged with a cool-looking blue kimono. "Here. Put this on. Father'll be home at twelve-thirty, for dinner, you know. You'll want a bath, won't you, dear?"

"Yes. Mummy, is it boiled—honestly?—on a day like this?"

"With onions," said Mrs. Brewster firmly.

Fifteen minutes later Pinky, splashing in a cool tub, heard the voice of Miz' Merz, high-pitched with excitement and a certain awful joy: "Miz' Brewster! Oh, Miz' Brewster! I found a moth in Mr. Brewster's winter flannels!"

"Oh!" in choked accents of fury from Pinky; and she brought a hard young fist down in the water—spat!—so that it splashed ceiling, hair and floor impartially.

Still, it was a cool and serene young daughter who greeted Hosea Brewster as he came limping up the porch stairs. He placed the flat of the foot down at each step, instead of heel and ball. It gave him a queer, hitching gait. The girl felt a sharp little constriction of her throat as she marked that rheumatic limp. "It's the beastly Wisconsin winters," she told herself. Then, darting out at him from the corner where she had been hiding: "S'prise! S'prise!"

His plump blond face, flushed with the unwonted heat, went darkly red. He dropped his hat. His arms gathered her in. Her fresh young cheek was pressed

against his dear, prickly one. So they stood for a long minute—close.

"Need a shave, dad."

"Well, gosh, how did I know my best girl was coming!" He held her off. "What's the matter, Pink? Don't they like your covers any more?"

"Not a thing, Hosey. Don't get fresh. They're redecorating my studio—you know—plasterers and stuff. I couldn't work. And I was lonesome for you."

Hosea Brewster went to the open doorway and gave a long whistle with a little quirk at the end. Then he came back to Pinky in the wide-seated porch swing. "You know," he said, his voice lowered confidentially, "I thought I'd take mother to New York for ten days or so. See the shows, and run around and eat at the dens of wickedness. She likes it for a change."

Pinky sat up, tense. "For a change? Dad, I want to talk to you about that. Mother needs——"

Mrs. Brewster's light footstep sounded in the hall. She wore an all-enveloping gingham apron. "How did you like your surprise, father?" She came over to him and kissed the top of his head. "I'm getting dinner so that Gussie can go on with the attic. Everything's ready if you want to come in. I didn't want to dish up until you were at the table, so's everything would be hot." She threw a laughing glance at Pinky.

But when they were seated, there appeared a platter of cold, thinly sliced ham for Pinky, and a crisp salad, and a featherweight cheese soufflé, and iced tea, and a dessert coolly capped with whipped cream.

"But, mother, you shouldn't have——" feebly.

"There are always a lot of things in the house. You know that. I just wanted to tease you."

Father Brewster lingered for an unwonted hour after the midday meal. But two o'clock found him back at the cold-storage plant. Pinky watched him go, a speculative look in her eyes.

She visited the attic that afternoon at four, when it was again neat, clean, orderly, smelling of soap and sunshine. Standing there in the centre of the big room, freshly napped, smartly coiffed, blue-serged, trim, the

very concentrated essence of modernity, she eyed with stern deliberation the funeral wheat wreath in its walnut frame; the trunks; the chests; the boxes all shelved and neatly inscribed with their "H's Fshg Tckl" and "Blk Nt Drs."

"Barbaric!" she said aloud, though she stood there alone. "Medieval! Mad! It has got to be stopped. Slavery!" After which she went downstairs and picked golden glow for the living-room vases and scarlet salvia for the bowl in the dining-room.

Still, as one saw Mrs. Brewster's tired droop at supper that night, there is no denying that there seemed some justification for Pinky's volcanic remarks.

Hosea Brewster announced, after supper, that he and Fred were going to have a session with the furnace; she needed going over in September before they began firing up for the winter.

"I'll go down with you," said Pinky.

"No, you stay up here with mother. You'll get all ashes and coal dust."

But Pinky was firm. "Mother's half dead. She's going straight up to bed, after that darned old attic. I'll come up to tuck you in, mummy."

And though she did not descend to the cellar until the overhauling process was nearly completed she did come down in time for the last of the scene. She perched at the foot of the stairs and watched the two men, overalled, sooty, tobacco-wreathed and happy. When, finally, Hosea Brewster knocked the ashes out of his stubby black pipe, dusted his sooty hands together briskly and began to peel his overalls, Pinky came forward.

She put her hand on his arm. "Dad, I want to talk to you."

"Careful there. Better not touch me. I'm all dirt. G'night, Fred."

"Listen, dad. Mother isn't well."

He stopped then, with one overall leg off and the other on, and looked at her. "Huh? What d'you mean —isn't well? Mother." His mouth was open. His eyes looked suddenly strained.

"This house—it's killing her. She could hardly keep her eyes open at supper. It's too much for her. She ought to be enjoying herself—like other women. She's a slave to the attic and all those huge rooms. And you're another."

"Me?" feebly.

"Yes. A slave to this furnace. You said yourself to Fred, just now, that it was all worn out, and needed new pipes or something—I don't know what. And that coal was so high it would be cheaper using dollar bills for fuel. Oh, I know you were just being funny. But it was partly true. Wasn't it? Wasn't it?"

"Yeh, but listen here, Paula." He never called her Paula unless he was terribly disturbed. "About mother—you said——"

"You and she ought to go away this winter—not just for a trip, but to stay. You"—she drew a long breath and made the plunge—"you ought to give up the house."

"Give up——"

"Permanently. Mother and you are buried alive here. You ought to come to New York to live. Both of you will love it when you are there for a few days. I don't mean to come to a hotel. I mean to take a little apartment, a furnished apartment at first to see how you like it—two rooms and kitchenette, like a playhouse."

Hosey Brewster looked down at his own big bulk. Then around the great furnace room. "Oh, but listen——"

"No, I want you to listen first. Mother's worn out, I tell you. It isn't as if she were the old-fashioned kind; she isn't. She loves the theatres, and pretty hats, and shoes with buckles, and lobster, and concerts."

He broke in again: "Sure; she likes 'em for change. But for a steady diet—— Besides, I've got a business to 'tend to. My gosh! I've got a business to——"

"You know perfectly well that Wetzler practically runs the whole thing—or could, if you'd let him." Youth is cruel like that, when it wants its way.

He did not even deny it. He seemed suddenly old. Pinky's heart smote her a little. "It's just that you've

got so used to this great barracks you don't know how unhappy it's making you. Why, mother said to-day that she hated it. I asked about the attic—the cleaning and all—and she said she hated it."

"Did she say that, Paula?"

"Yes."

He dusted his hands together, slowly, spiritlessly. His eyes looked pained and dull. "She did, h'm? You say she did?" He was talking to himself, and thinking, thinking.

Pinky, sensing victory, left him. She ran lightly up the cellar stairs, through the first-floor rooms and up to the second floor. Her mother's bedroom door was open.

A little mauve lamp shed its glow upon the tired woman in one of the plump, grey-enamel beds. "No, I'm not sleeping. Come here, dear. What in the world have you been doing in the cellar all this time?"

"Talking to dad." She came over and perched herself on the side of the bed. She looked down at her mother. Then she bent and kissed her. Mrs. Brewster looked incredibly girlish with the lamp's rosy glow on her face and her hair, warmly brown and profuse, rippling out over the pillow. Scarcely a thread of grey in it. "You know, mother, I think dad isn't well. He ought to go away."

As if by magic the youth and glow faded out of the face on the pillow. As she sat up, clutching her nightgown to her breast, she looked suddenly pinched and old. "What do you mean, Pinky! Father—but he isn't sick. He——"

"Not sick. I don't mean sick exactly. But sort of worn out. That furnace. He's sick and tired of the thing; that's what he said to Fred. He needs a change. He ought to retire and enjoy life. He could. This house is killing both of you. Why in the world don't you close it up, or sell it, and come to New York?"

"But we do. We did. Last winter——"

"I don't mean just for a little trip. I mean to live. Take a little two-room apartment in one of the new buildings—near my studio—and relax. Enjoy your-

selves. Meet new men and women. Live! You're in a rut—both of you. Besides, dad needs it. That rheumatism of his, with these Wisconsin winters——"

"But California—we could go to California for——"

"That's only a stop-gap. Get your little place in New York all settled, and then run away whenever you like, without feeling that this great bulk of a house is waiting for you. Father hates it; I know it."

"Did he ever say so?"

"Well, practically. He thinks you're fond of it. He——"

Slow steps ascending the stairs—heavy, painful steps. The two women listened in silence. Every footfall seemed to emphasize Pinky's words. The older woman turned her face toward the sound, her lips parted, her eyes anxious, tender.

"How tired he sounds," said Pinky; "and old. And he's only—why, dad's only fifty-eight."

"Fifty-seven," snapped Mrs. Brewster sharply, protectingly.

Pinky leaned forward and kissed her. "Good night, mummy dear. You're so tired, aren't you?"

Her father stood in the doorway.

"Good night, dear. I ought to be tucking you into bed. It's all turned around, isn't it? Biscuits and honey for breakfast, remember."

So Pinky went off to her own room (*sans* "slp cov") and slept soundly, dreamlessly, as does one whose work is well done.

Three days later Pinky left. She waved a good-bye from the car platform, a radiant, electric, confident Pinky, her work well done.

"*Au 'voir!* The first of November! Everything begins then. You'll love it. You'll be real New Yorkers by Christmas. Now, no changing your minds, remember."

And by Christmas, somehow, miraculously, there they were, real New Yorkers; or as real and as New York as anyone can be who is living in a studio apartment (duplex) that has been rented (furnished) from a lady who turned out to be from Des Moines.

When they arrived, Pinky had four apartments waiting for their inspection. She told them this in triumph, and well she might, it being the winter after the war, when New York apartments were as scarce as black diamonds and twice as costly.

Father Brewster, on hearing the price, emitted a long, low whistle and said: "How many rooms did you say?"

"Two—and a kitchenette, of course."

"Well, then, all I can say is the furniture ought to be solid gold for that; inlaid with rubies and picked out with platinum."

But it wasn't. In fact, it wasn't solid anything, being mostly of a very impermanent structure and style. Pinky explained that she had kept the best for the last. The thing that worried Father Brewster was that, no matter at what hour of the day they might happen to call on the prospective lessor, that person was always feminine and hatted. Once it was eleven in the morning. Once five in the afternoon.

"Do these New York women wear hats in the house all the time?" demanded Hosea Brewster worriedly. "I think they sleep in 'em. It's a wonder they ain't bald. Maybe they are. Maybe that's why. Anyway, it makes you feel like a book agent."

He sounded excited and tired. "Now, father!" said Mrs. Brewster, soothingly.

They were in the elevator that was taking them up to the fourth and (according to Pinky) choicest apartment. The building was what is known as a studio apartment, in the West Sixties. The corridors were done in red flagstones, with grey-tone walls. The metal doors were painted grey.

Pinky was snickering. "Now she'll say: 'Well, we've been very comfortable here.' They always do. Don't look too eager."

"No fear," put in Hosey Brewster.

"It's really lovely. And a real fireplace. Everything new and good. She's asking two hundred and twenty-five. Offer her one seventy-five. She'll take two hundred."

"You bet she will," growled Hosea.

She answered the door—hatted; hatted in henna. that being the season's chosen colour. A small dark foyer, overcrowded with furniture; a studio living-room, bright, high-ceilinged, smallish; one entire side was window. There were Japanese prints, and a baby grand piano, and a lot of tables, and a davenport placed the way they do it on the stage, with its back to the room and its arms to the fireplace, and a long table just behind it, with a lamp on it, and books, and a dull jar thing, just as you've seen it in the second-act library.

Hosea Brewster twisted his head around and up to gaze at the lofty ceiling. "Feel's if I was standing at the bottom of a well," he remarked.

But the hatted one did not hear him. "No; no dining-room," she was saying briskly. "No, indeed. I always use this gate-legged table. You see? It pulls out like this. You can easily seat six—eight, in fact."

"Heaven forbid!" in fervent *sotto voce* from Father Brewster.

"It's an enormous saving in time and labour."

"The—kitchen!" inquired Mrs. Brewster.

The hat waxed playful. "You'll never guess where the kitchen is!" She skipped across the room. "You see this screen?" They saw it. A really handsome affair, and so placed at one end of the room that it looked a part of it. "Come here." They came. The reverse side of the screen was dotted with hooks, and on each hook hung a pot, a pan, a ladle, a spoon. And there was the tiny gas range, the infinitesimal ice chest, the miniature sink. The whole would have been lost in one corner of the Brewster's Winnebago china closet.

"Why, how—how wonderful!" breathed Mrs. Brewster.

"Isn't it? So complete—and so convenient. I've cooked roasts, steaks, chops, everything, right here. It's just play."

A terrible fear seized upon Father Brewster. He eyed the sink and the tiny range with a suspicious eye. "The beds," he demanded, "where are the beds?"

She opened the little oven door and his heart sank. But, "They're upstairs," she said. "This is a duplex, you know."

A little flight of winding stairs ended in a balcony. The rail was hung with a gay mandarin robe. Two more steps and you were in the bedroom—a rather breathless little bedroom, profusely rose-coloured, and with whole battalions of photographs in flat silver frames standing about on dressing table, shelf, desk. The one window faced a grey brick wall.

They took the apartment. And thus began a life of ease and gayety for Mr. and Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster, of Winnebago, Wisconsin.

Pinky had dinner with them the first night, and they laughed a great deal, what with one thing and another. She sprang up to the balcony, and let down her bright hair, and leaned over the railing, *à la Juliet,* having first decked Hosey out in a sketchy but effective Romeo costume, consisting of a hastily snatched up scarf over one shoulder, Pinky's little turban, and a frying pan for a lute. Mother Brewster did the Nurse, and by the time Hosea began his limping climb up the balcony, the turban over one eye and the scarf winding itself about his stocky legs, they ended by tumbling in a heap of tearful laughter.

After Pinky left there came upon them, in that cozy, little, two-room apartment, a feeling of desolation and vastness, and a terrible loneliness such as they had never dreamed of in the great twelve-room house in Winnebago. They kept close to each other. They toiled up the winding stairs together and stood a moment on the balcony, feigning a light-heartedness that neither of them felt.

They lay very still in the little stuffy rose-coloured room, and the street noises of New York came up to them—a loose chain flapping against the mud guard of a taxi; the jolt of a flat-wheeled Eighth Avenue street car: the roar of an L train; laughter; the bleat of a motor horn; a piano in the apartment next door, or upstairs, or down.

She thought, as she lay there, choking of the great

gracious grey-and-blue room at home, many-windowed, sweet-smelling, quiet. Quiet!

He thought, as he lay there, choking, of the gracious grey-blue room at home; many-windowed, sweet-smelling, quiet. Quiet!

Then, as he had said that night in September: "Sleeping, mother?"

"N-no. Not yet. Just dozing off."

"It's the strange beds, I guess. This is going to be great, though. Great!"

"My, yes!" agreed Mrs. Brewster, heartily.

They awoke next morning unrefreshed. Pa Brewster, back home in Winnebago, always whistled mournfully, off key, when he shaved. The more doleful his tune the happier his wife knew him to be. Also, she had learned to mark his progress by this or that passage in a refrain. Sometimes he sang, too (also off key), and you heard his genial roar all over the house. The louder he roared, and the more doleful the tune, the happier his frame of mind. Milly Brewster knew this. She had never known that she knew it. Neither had he. It was just one of those subconscious bits of marital knowledge that make for happiness and understanding.

When he sang "The Dying Cowboy's Lament" and came to the passage, "Oh, take me to the churchyard and lay the sod o-o-over me," Mrs. Brewster used to say: "Gussie, Mr. Brewster'll be down in ten minutes. You can start the eggs."

In the months of their gay life in Sixty-seventh Street, Hosey Brewster never once sang "The Dying Cowboy's Lament," nor whistled "In the Sweet By-and-By." No; he whistled not at all, or, when he did, gay bits of jazz heard at the theatre or in a restaurant the night before. He deceived no one, least of all himself. Sometimes his voice would trail off into nothingness, but he would catch the tune and toss it up again, heavily, as though it were a physical weight.

Theatres! Music! Restaurants! Teas! Shopping! The gay life!

"Enjoying yourself, Milly?" he would say.

"Time of my life, father."

She had had her hair dressed in those geometrical, undulations without which no New York audience feels itself clothed. They saw Pinky less frequently as time went on and her feeling or responsibility lessened. Besides, the magazine covers took most of her day. She gave a tea for her father and mother at her own studio, and Mrs. Brewster's hat, slippers, gown and manner equalled in line, style, cut and texture those of any other woman present, which rather surprised her until she had talked to five or six of them.

She and Hosey drifted together and compared notes. "Say, Milly," he confided, "they're all from Wisconsin —or approximately; Michigan and Minnesota, and Iowa, and around. Far's I can make out there's only one New Yorker, really, in the whole caboodle of 'em."

"Which one?"

"That kind of plain little one over there—sensible looking, with the blue suit. I was talking to her. She was born right here in New York, but she doesn't live here—that is, not in the city. Lives in some place in the country, in a house."

A sort of look came into Mrs. Brewster's eyes. "Is that so? I'd like to talk to her, Hosey. Take me over."

She did talk to the quiet little woman in the plain blue suit. And the quiet little woman said: "Oh, dear, yes!" She ignored her r's fascinatingly, as New Yorkers do. "We live in Connecticut. You see, you Wisconsin people have crowded us out of New York; no breathing space. Besides, how can one live here? I mean to say—live. And then the children—it's no place for children, grown up or otherwise. I love it—oh, yes, indeed. I love it. But it's too difficult."

Mrs. Brewster defended it like a true Westerner. "But if you have just a tiny apartment, with a kitchenette——"

The New York woman laughed. There was nothing malicious about her. But she laughed. "I tried it. There's one corner of my soul that's still wrinkled from the crushing. Everything in a heap. Not to speak of

the slavery of it. That—that deceitful, lying kitchenette."

This was the first woman that Mrs. Brewster had talked to—really talked to—since leaving Winnebago. And she liked women. She missed them. At first she had eyed wonderingly, speculatively, the women she saw on Fifth Avenue. Swathed luxuriously in precious pelts, marvelously coiffed and hatted, wearing the frailest of boots and hose, exhaling a mysterious, heady scent, they were more like strange exotic birds than women.

The clerks in the shops, too—they were so remote, so contemptuous. When she went into Gerretson's, back home, Nellie Monahan was likely to say: "You've certainly had a lot of wear out of that blue, Mrs. Brewster. Let's see, you've had it two—three years this spring? My land! Let me show you our new taupes."

Pa Brewster had taken to conversing with the doorman. That adamantine individual, unaccustomed to being addressed as a human being, was startled at first, surly and distrustful. But he mellowed under Hosey's simple and friendly advances. They became quite pals, these two—perhaps two as lonely men as you could find in all lonely New York.

"I guess you ain't a New Yorker, huh?" Mike said.

"Me? No."

"Th' most of the folks in th' buildin' ain't."

"Ain't!" Hosea Brewster was startled into it. "They're artists, aren't they? Most of 'em?"

"No! Out-of-town folks, like you. West, East an' Californy, an' around there. Livin' here, though. Seem t' like it better'n where they come from. I dunno."

Hosey Brewster took to eying them as Mrs. Brewster had eyed the women. He wondered about them, these tight, trim men, rather short of breath, buttoned so snugly into their shining shoes and their tailored clothes, with their necks bulging in a fold of fat above the back of their white linen collar. He knew that he would never be like them. It wasn't his square-toe shoes that made the difference, or his grey hat, or his baggy trousers. It was something inside him—something he lacked, he

thought. It never occurred to him that it was something he possessed that they did not.

"Enjoying yourself, Milly?"

"I should say I am, father."

"That's good. No housework and responsibility to this, is there?"

"It's play."

She hated the toy gas stove, and the tiny ice chest and the screen pantry. All her married life she had kept house in a big, bounteous way; apples in barrels; butter in firkins; flour in sacks; eggs in boxes; sugar in bins; cream in crocks. Sometimes she told herself, bitterly, that it was easier to keep twelve rooms tidy and habitable than one combination kitchen-dining-and-living room.

"Chops taste good, Hosey?"

"Grand. But you oughtn't to be cooking around like this. We'll eat out to-morrow night somewhere, and go to a show."

"You're enjoying it, aren't you, Hosey, h'm?"

"It's the life, mother! It's the life!"

His ruddy colour began to fade. He took to haunting department-store kitchenware sections. He would come home with a new kind of cream whipper, or a patent device for the bathroom. He would tinker happily with this, driving a nail, adjusting a screw. At such times he was even known to begin to whistle some scrap of a doleful tune such as he used to hum. But he would change, quickly, into something lively. The price of butter, eggs, milk, cream and the like horrified his Wisconsin cold-storage sensibilities. He used often to go down to Fulton Market before daylight and walk about among the stalls and shops, piled with tons of food of all kinds. He would talk to the marketmen, and the buyers and grocers, and come away feeling almost happy for a time.

Then, one day, with a sort of shock, he remembered a farmer he had known back home in Winnebago. He knew the farmers for miles around, naturally, in his business. This man had been a steady butter-and-egg acquaintance, one of the wealthy farmers in that pros-

perous farming community. For his family's sake he had moved into town, a ruddy, rufous-bearded, clumping fellow, intelligent, kindly. They had sold the farm with a fine profit and had taken a boxlike house on Franklin Street. He had nothing to do but enjoy himself. You saw him out on the porch early, very early summer mornings.

You saw him ambling about the yard, poking at a weed here, a plant there. A terrible loneliness was upon him; a loneliness for the soil he had deserted. And slowly, resistlessly, the soil pulled at him with its black strength and its green tendrils, down, down, until he ceased to struggle and lay there clasped gently to her breast, the mistress he had thought to desert and who had him again at last, and forever.

"I don't know what ailed him," his widow had said. weeping. "He just seemed to kind of pine away."

It was one morning in April—one soft, golden April morning—when this memory had struck Hosey Brewster. He had been down at Fulton Market. Something about the place—the dewy fresh vegetables, the crates of eggs, the butter, the cheese—had brought such a surge of homesickness to him as to amount to an actual nausea. Riding uptown in the subway he had caught a glimpse of himself in a slot-machine mirror. His face was pale and somehow shrunken. He looked at his hands. The skin hung loose where the little pads of fat had plumped them out.

"Gosh!" he said. "Gosh, I——"

He thought, then, of the red-faced farmer who used to come clumping into the cold-storage warehouse in his big boots and his buffalo coat. A great fear swept over him and left him weak and sick.

The chill grandeur of the studio-building foyer stabbed him. The glittering lift made him dizzy, somehow, this morning. He shouldn't have gone out without some breakfast perhaps. He walked down the flagged corridor softly; turned the key ever so cautiously. She might still be sleeping. He turned the knob, gently; tiptoed in and, turning, fell over a heavy wooden object that lay directly in his path in the dim little hall.

A barked shin. A good round oath.

"Hosey! What's the matter? What——" She came running to him. She led him into the bright front room.

"What was that thing? A box or something, right there in front of the door. What the ——"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Hosey. You sometimes have breakfast downtown. I didn't know——"

Something in her voice—he stopped rubbing the injured shin to look up at her. Then he straightened slowly, his mouth ludicrously open. Her head was bound in a white towel. Her skirt was pinned back. Her sleeves were rolled up. Chairs, tables, rugs, ornaments were huddled in a promiscuous heap. Mrs. Hosea C. Brewster was cleaning house.

"Milly!" he began, sternly. "And that's just the thing you came here to get away from. If Pinky——"

"I didn't mean to, father. But when I got up this morning there was a letter—a letter from the woman who owns this apartment, you know. She asked if I'd go to the hall closet—the one she reserved for her own things, you know—and unlock it, and get out a box she told me about, and have the hall boy express it to her. And I did, and—look!"

Limping a little he followed her. She turned on the light that hung in the closet. Boxes—pasteboard boxes—each one bearing a cryptic penciling on the end that stared out at you. "Drp Stud Win," said one; "Sum Slp Cov Bedrm," another; "Toil. Set & Pic. Frms."

Mrs. Brewster turned to her husband, almost shamefacedly, and yet with a little air of defiance. "It—I don't know—it made me—not homesick, Hosey. Not homesick, exactly; but—well, I guess I'm not the only woman with a walnut streak in her modern make-up. Here's the woman—she came to the door with her hat on, and yet——"

Truth—blinding, white-hot truth—burst in upon him. "Mother," he said—and he stood up, suddenly robust, virile, alert—"mother, let's go home."

Mechanically she began to unpin the looped-back skirt.

"When?"

"Now."

"But, Hosey! Pinky—this flat—until June——"

"Now! Unless you want to stay. Unless you like it here in this—this make-believe, double-barreled, duplex do-funny of a studio thing. Let's go home, mother. Let's go home—and breathe."

In Wisconsin you are likely to find snow in April—snow or slush. The Brewsters found both. Yet on their way up from the station in 'Gene Buck's flivver taxi, they beamed out at it as if it were a carpet of daisies.

At the corner of Elm and Jackson Streets Hosey Brewster stuck his head out of the window. "Stop here a minute, will you, 'Gene?"

They stopped in front of Hengel's meat market, and Hosey went in. Mrs. Brewster leaned back without comment.

Inside the shop. "Well, I see you're back from the East," said Aug Hengel.

"Yep."

"We thought you'd given us the go-by, you stayed away so long."

"No, sir-ree! Say, Aug, give me that piece of bacon—the big piece. And send me up some corned beef to-morrow, for corned beef and cabbage. I'll take a steak along for to-night. Oh, about four pounds. That's right."

It seemed to him that nothing less than a side of beef could take out of his mouth the taste of those fiddling little lamb chops and the restaurant fare of the past six months.

All through the winter Fred had kept up a little heat in the house, with an eye to frozen water pipes. But there was a chill upon the place as they opened the door now. It was late afternoon. The house was very still, with the stillness of a dwelling that has long been uninhabited. The two stood there a moment, peering into the darkened rooms. Then Hosea Brewster strode forward, jerked up this curtain, that curtain with a sharp snap. flap! He stamped his feet to rid them of slush.

He took off his hat and threw it high in the air and opened his arms wide and emitted a whoop of sheer joy and relief.

"Welcome home! Home!"

She clung to him. "Oh, Hosey, isn't it wonderful? How big it looks! Huge!"

"Land, yes." He strode from hall to dining-room, from kitchen to library. "I know how a jack-in-the-box feels when the lid's opened. No wonder it grins and throws out its arms."

They did little talking after that. By five o'clock he was down in the cellar. She heard him making a great sound of rattling and bumping and shaking and pounding and shoveling. She smelled the acrid odour of his stubby black pipe.

"Hosey!"—from the top of the cellar stairs. "Hosey, bring up a can of preserves when you come."

"What?"

"Can of preserves."

"What kind?"

"Any kind you like."

"Can I have two kinds?"

He brought up quince marmalade and her choicest damson plums. He put them down on the kitchen table and looked around, spatting his hands together briskly to rid them of dust. "She's burning pretty good now. That Fred! Don't any more know how to handle a boiler than a baby does. Is the house getting warmer?"

He clumped into the dining-room, through the butler's pantry, but he was back again in a wink, his eyes round. "Why, say, mother! You've got out the best dishes, and the silver, and the candles and all. And the tablecloth with the do-dads on it. Why——"

"I know it." She opened the oven door, took out a pan of biscuits and slid it deftly to one side. "It seems as if I can't spread enough. I'm going to use the biggest platters, and I've put two extra boards in the table. It's big enough to seat ten. I want everything big somehow. I've cooked enough potatoes for a regiment, and I know it's wasteful, and I don't care.

I'll eat in my kitchen apron, if you'll keep on your overalls. Come on."

He cut into the steak—a great thick slice. He knew she could never eat it, and she knew she could never eat it. But she did eat it all, ecstatically. And in a sort of ecstatic Nirvana the quiet and vastness and peace of the big old frame house settled down upon them.

The telephone in the hall rang startlingly, unexpectedly.

"Let me go, Milly."

"But who in the world! Nobody knows we're——"

He was at the telephone. "Who? Who? Oh." He turned: "It's Miz' Merz. She says her little Minnie went by at six and saw a light in the house. She—— Hello! What? . . . She says she wants to know if she's to save time for you at the end of the month for the April cleaning."

Mrs. Brewster took the receiver from him: "The twenty-fifth, as usual, Miz' Merz. The twenty-fifth, as usual. The attic must be a sight."

THE END

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